

শারদীয়া

২৭ তম সংস্করণ, ১৪২৮

সন্নিবট



# Sannikat

Edition 27, 2021



Bengali Association  
of Minnesota

# দুর্গোৎসব ২০২১

(২৩ অক্টোবর)

নির্ঘণ্ট

পূজা শুরু সকাল ১০:০০

পুষ্পাঞ্জলি ১:০০

পূজোর ভোগ ২:০০

আরতি ২:৩০

~ বিরতি ~

দশমী পূজা শুরু ৩:০০

দশমীর পুষ্পাঞ্জলি ৩:৪৫

বিসর্জন এবং পূজোর সমাপন



## Durgotsav 2021

(23 October)

Schedule

Puja starts 10:00AM

Pushpanjali 1:00PM

Puja Bhog 2:00PM

Arati 2:30PM

~ Break ~

Dashami Puja starts 3:00PM

Dashami Pushpanjali 3:45PM

Bisorjon and Puja ends 4:30PM





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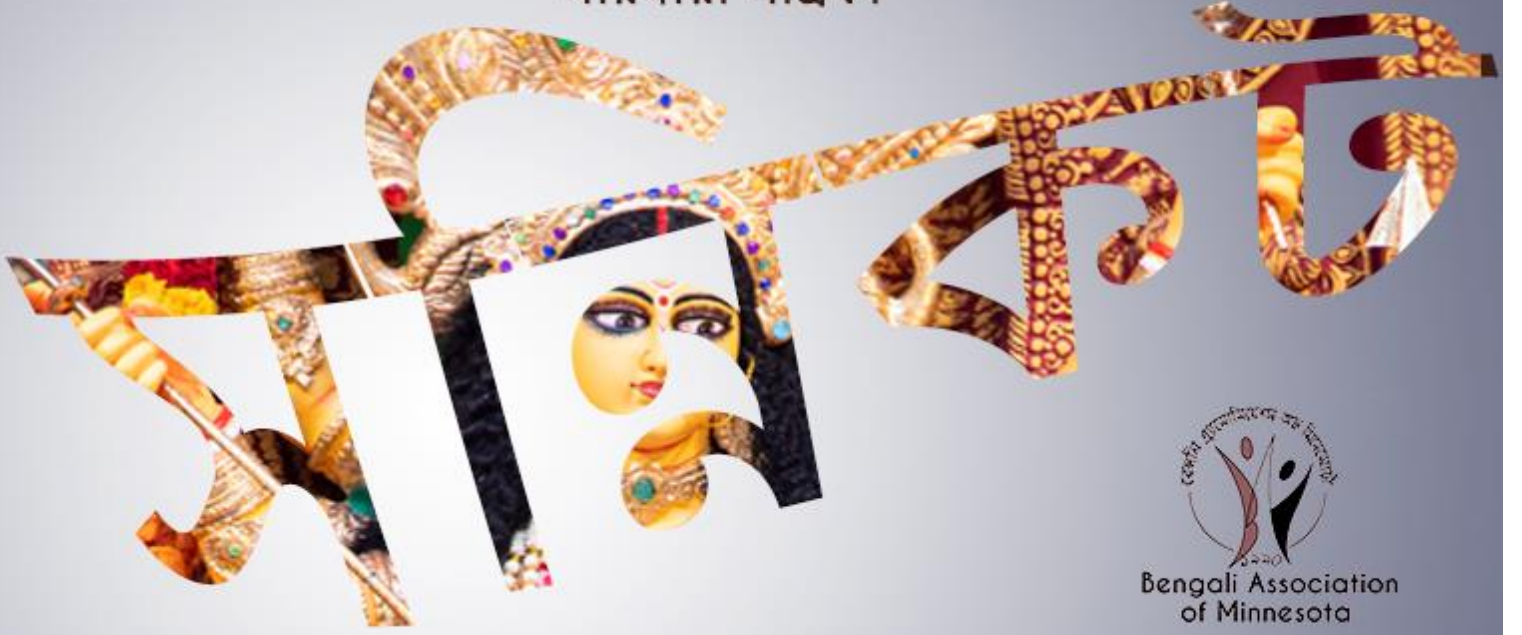
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# শারদ শুভেচ্ছা



দুর্গতিনাশিনী / Ishita Chakraborty Bhaduri

বেঙ্গলি অ্যাসোসিয়েশন অফ মিনেসোটা  
নিবেদিত  
শারদীয়া পত্রিকা



*Art: Bodhisatya Bhaduri*

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*Arijit Mondal, Aaratrika Mondal, Bodhisatya Bhaduri*

**Cover artwork:** *Tulika Chakraborty*

[www.mnbangali.org](http://www.mnbangali.org)

## ***From the President's desk:***

As the long days of Minnesota summers transition to the cool, crisp days of Fall, we feel the familiar tug to our heartstrings – Durga Puja is around the corner!

In addition to soaking in the festivities with friends and family and enjoying the superb culinary options, Durga Puja is all about celebrating our culture and shared camaraderie. It's a major festival for Bengalis and all others who have made it part of their lives. Traditionally, Durga Puja is an annual festival celebrated over a period of ten days. In Kolkata, streets are lit up while puja pandals set up in myriad themes adorn every nook and corner of the West Bengal capital. Other parts of India see their own modifications to this major festival with fine nuances to celebrate regional influences.



This marks the 31<sup>st</sup> Durga Puja in the Twin Cities organized by the Bengali Association of MN. For many of us in the US, it connects us to our roots and is a celebration of the shared values and culture that bring people together – in peace

and harmony!

The recent year has been like no other, as we all adjust to a new norm – socially and in our professional lives. It's also a testament to the human spirit that adapts and strives to forge ahead, no matter what the odds are! The decision to hold Durga Puja this year was not an easy one. Our BOD team looked at various options, while keeping safety considerations for all at prime importance. The hybrid model that was eventually arrived at, was based on CDC and MN State guidelines as well as a “pulse” of the community. I'd like to thank the BAM Executive Committee and the Board members for their dedication to this effort. As we meet in person or virtually to celebrate the victory of good over evil, amidst the resonant sound of “dhaak” and the divine purity of “kaash” flowers, let's take a moment to be thankful for the blessings that have come our way.

The BAM leadership team has operated on a careful strategy this year in compliance with COVID-19 guidance and State regulations. We participated in Connect India which was well attended by the senators and heads of regional organizations. We had a good Saraswati Puja celebration, along with Cultural programs that were streamed with virtual participation and viewing available across US and India. BAM had a strong presence at IndiaFEST 2021 at the State Capitol Grounds on Aug 14<sup>th</sup> – with an impressive parade and booth. Our collaboration with IAM and other regional groups has provided networking opportunities for all as well as an opportunity to help others during these challenging times. I am glad to share that BAM set a record this year – we were the winners of the “Best Booth Exhibit” – 2 years in a row!

Durgotsav brings people together, and its success is a reflection of the hard work of many individuals. Enjoy the cultural functions that span over several days and join in the fun activities. I would like to thank the BOD, Committee Chairs and all the volunteers who stepped up to make the event a success. Stay Safe and take care of each other...!

Warm Regards,

Binita Bose Sinha

**(President - Bengali Association of Minnesota)**

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- Subhadip Niyogi

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### Pujo & Logistics Sub-committee

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- Antara Pratihar
- Binita Sinha
- Ipshita Choudhury
- Mousumi Maiti
- Rumi Talukdar
- Suchismita Basu

## Editorial Notes

A Big Thank You to our budding artists, authors and poets (children's category), our respected Seniors and Community members for their valuable contributions to our annual magazine, Sannikat! This year, we also bring to you thoughtful contributions from extended families in India. We are astounded by the response and can't wait to share the 27th edition of Sannikat with everyone! Apart from the artworks, stories, manuscripts and poems, we have introduced new categories like "Senior Spotlight" and "Achievements" to the magazine.

We are happy to bring back a hard copy of the magazine which will be available during Durga Puja festivities at a nominal cost. Additionally, Sannikat will be available through Amazon Publication House, the details of which will be posted in MNbangali.org, the BAM website and MN Bengali (Bengali Association of Minnesota) Facebook page.

It is noteworthy to mention that the Sannikat editorial team faces various challenges of coming up with appropriate policies of citations, referencing, crediting for its specific content, and usage of images/photographs available online. We concluded that being a non-profit organization, all digital assets in the magazine not owned by the contributors, are used by them under the "fair use" doctrine of the US Copyright law.

Sannikat connects the Bengali Youth of BAM to their rich cultural heritage! We, the members of the community, are connected together by the love of our motherland and our roots. This magazine is a medium through which we can resonate with the contributors' thoughts. The happiness this season brings is no different than how it is in our motherland!

Let us all come together again this year and experience the joys of Durga Puja celebration through the Puja rituals in Park Center High School and Virtual Cultural Programs.

Thanks and Regards,

**Sannikat Editorial Committee, 2021**

**Bengali Association of Minnesota**





Anweshu Guha Ghosh

শিউলি ঝরানো দিন আনে সে  
চিরদিনের বাণী ..



Anweshu Guha Ghosh

## Senior Spotlight – Rita Mustaphi



Photo by Michael Daniel

### **Who am I?**

A simple question, but answering this requires me to think back about my whole life! Before I start, I thank the Bengali Association of Minnesota for requesting my contribution to the Sannikat's newly added section 'Seniors Spotlight!' I chose to visualize my personal history in a Q&A format. Now, where to begin...

**Q: Hi Rita/di/aunty/mashi/dida, tell us a little more about you and your work. Can you fill us in on your background and what your art form is?**

A: I was born and raised in Kolkata, India. I graduated from the University of Calcutta with a major in physiology and Rabindra Bharati University with a major in dance. After training in dance with various gurus, I chose to specialize in Kathak dance from none other than the legend himself, the Kathak maestro, Padma Vibhushan Pandit Birju Maharaj! He taught me to love dance as though it were human, to feel its all-encompassing beauty and to center myself within my body. To me, dance is a place for investigation, experimentation, struggle, desire, taking risks, falling and rising up again! Nature is my inspiration, space is my canvas, and as I experience the world in motion, I create moving paintings that resonate on a deeper level.

**Q: When did you first become interested in dance? How did it happen? Who were some of your influences?**

A: This question takes me back to my childhood, when I was suffering from rickets—a softening and weakening of bones in children usually due to inadequate levels of vitamin D. My pediatrician suggested to my parents that I needed physical exercise. To my parents' surprise, they found me moving in front of large mirrors in our home and



that gave them the idea to hire a dance teacher for me starting at age 4 or 5. If my parents had not come to that conclusion, I may not be dancing today!

My upbringing was unique in such a way that though I lived in the city most of the year, every summer vacation and Durga Puja time, we visited our ancestral home in a village in Burdwan. We always stayed for the entire vacation among 33 members in our joint family! We lived in a sprawling home with a temple, large ponds, mango and lychee groves, cow sheds and more! I finally had enough friends to play and to fight with, and with this stimulation as well as being so close to nature, my imagination soared. Together, we created dance, music, skits and magic shows guided by our grandparents, aunts and neighbors. We performed in the village square with oil lamps all around as our only source of light! How thrilling it was....

**Q: Can you tell us about your journey to the U.S. and your life here?**

A: I had an arranged marriage to Kalyan Mustaphi, who immigrated to the U.S., and I landed in New Jersey in June of 1970. My first dance performance there was in a film based on Rabindranath Thakur's *Chandalika* in New York City! In 1971, we moved to Minnesota. In the meantime, I took courses in Medical Technology, worked at Mount Sinai Hospital as a medical technologist, assisting pathologists in collecting tissue samples for processing—and believe me, *I hated it!*

My mother-in-law, an enlightened woman who used to write editorial columns in the Boshumoti newspaper, advised me to dance, create and teach! And that became my mantra!

In those days, there were very few Indian cultural activities to be found, let alone Bengali! So I joined a group of Indian American mothers in creating SILC (the School for Indian Languages and Culture) in 1979, which is now located in St. Paul. Later, with the help of a handful of Bengalis with a passion for music and

dance, I jumped into creating Tagore dance dramas for the community. Eventually, the India Club presented *Shapmochan* and *Shyama* free of charge to audiences at the Northrop Auditorium, then *Tasher Desh* at O'Shaughnessy Auditorium. We also performed at countless community celebrations, such as Naba Barsho, Durga Puja, Saraswati Puja, Diwali Festival, Festival of Nations and many more! To me, the process is more important than the final event. What joy we had together, not only in creating and participating in the art, but also in cooking and eating together at rehearsals, constructing the costumes and props together, etc. I remember our Bengali community's first Durga Puja in 1980, when we decorated the pratima with painted paper plates as '*chal-chitra*' & '*Chand-mala*', cooked enormous amounts of food and sweets and of course had a beautiful cultural program! In 1990, together, we, the Bengalis, formed The Bengali Association of Minnesota! I served as its president for 2 years in 2017 through 2019. A community of enthusiasts and art lovers was slowly built for Indian art in Minnesota, my new home!

**Q: Now tell us about your dance company, Katha Dance Theatre and how that began?**

A: In 1978, in response to demand from the local Indian community, I began teaching in the Twin Cities. Then in 1987, I realized my dream by founding a professional company and school of Kathak dance, Katha Dance Theatre (KDT). As with any endeavor, it took a tremendous amount of energy and drive to create something from nothing. KDT was Minnesota's first Asian Indian dance company, and it is the only Kathak dance company in Minnesota and one of the most reputed professional Kathak companies in the United States. My company of eight professional dancers has performed numerous shows from an active repertory of substantial works that I have choreographed over the past 33 years. Our signature works, *Khudhita Pashan* (The Hungry Stones), *Kathak Yatra* and *Abhinaya* toured to Banga Sammelan at Chicago, as well as Baltimore, Philadelphia and Toronto, and received



standing ovations! With *Karna - the Abandoned Hero*, *Sudha's Story* and *Katha-Kahini*, we toured to India to perform at dance festivals like Khajuraho, Modera, Kathak Kendra's Vasantatsav and more!

In addition to my work with KDT, I've performed as a company member of Minneapolis' Guthrie Theatre and as a troupe member of Pandit Birju Maharaj at Carnegie Hall. My recent work for the Bengali Association of Minnesota was a thematic performance of *Agomoni* (2017) with 60+ performers! I have received three McKnight Fellowships for choreography, a Lifetime achievement award in 2011 from the India Association of Minnesota and a 2012 Education Award from the Ordway Center of Performing Arts in the category of Excellence in Vision. In 2021, I received a 'Nari Shakti Award' (Women Empowerment Award) from Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR).

**Q: What do you get out of teaching versus creating/performing your own work? What do you enjoy the most about teaching?**

A: Teaching and choreographing dance are two of the most satisfying parts of my life. I believe that a strong choreographic piece begins with a strong intent and blossoms from there. My desire to create dance was born from an atmosphere of freedom in which ideas and imagination are encouraged and grow and flourish. When I see our dance school students win accolades at international dance shows, I feel like a proud parent. When I performed at the prestigious Carnegie Hall, it brought me nervousness but also immense joy like nothing else.

**Q: Have you been working on any new projects lately?**

A: Yes. For two years, I've been working with composer/vocalist J.D. Steele, and Ifrah Mansour, a Somali immigrant to the U.S., on a new evening-length piece based on a revolutionary poem titled

"*Saamyabaadi - Of Equality*" written by the revolutionary poet Kazi Nazrul Islam. We're looking forward to premiering it at St. Paul's Park Square Theatre this November!

**Q: During this time of great change in Minnesota and around the world, how do you see the arts as fitting into that story?**

A: Art and culture are essential for community-building and development. They have the power to help you understand the past and offer ideas about ways to share a more equitable future. They can also help to strengthen cultural identity and heal trauma.

**Q: How do you practice creativity in your everyday life?**

A. I listen to my mind, I observe my surroundings, I take a stroll and think, I daydream, I dance and I create dance that transforms me! I create works that provoke feelings, stimulate the senses and activate the mind.

### **Conclusion**

I feel blessed to have a very caring and supportive family! Kalyan, my husband, whom I have known for 51 years, is nothing but a blessing to me; a lover, a friend, a critic and an advisor who is very understanding, respectful and accepting in every way! Our daughters, Raka and Semonti, two very accomplished women, are our eyes and ears. Not only did they make us parents of two very able sons-in-law, Chris and Scott, but also filled our lives with enormous joy: three munchkins, our grandsons, Linden (8), Kavi (5) and Khelan (3)! I live to see smiles on their faces and lights in their eyes!

And you all, my community that includes my extended family, a small circle of trusted friends and a vast support network - your loving, acceptance and availability uplift and encourage me. You all inspire me to love, hope, and continue living a meaningful life!

**Namaskar!**

**Rita Mitra Mustaphi**





## Recognition of Special Achievement

### Dental nanomaterials trailblazer Sumita Mitra receives European Inventor Award 2021



The European Patent Office (EPO) recently honored Indian-American chemist Dr. Sumita Mitra with the European Inventor Award 2021 in the “Non-EPO countries” category for her trailblazing work in successfully integrating nanotechnology into dental materials. This Award is one of Europe’s most prestigious innovation honors. The Award ceremony took place virtually on June 17, 2021. Dr. Mitra was the first to propose the use of nanoparticles as fillers in dental composites and, working with a team of scientists and engineers at 3M Company’s Oral Care Division, was able to successfully integrate nanotechnology to the production of dental materials, leading to a new family of composites to repair teeth. The resulting filling materials are stronger, more durable and aesthetically superior than previous dental fillings. The technology was first commercialized in 2002 as 3M™ Filtek™ Supreme Universal Restorative. Since then further improvements have been made and a family of Filtek products have been introduced. Dentists all over the globe have adopted this material in their practice to repair broken and diseased teeth; more than one billion teeth have been repair using this material helping to restore people’s smiles. “Her invention remains commercially successful nearly 20 years after its launch – another reason why she is an inspiration to the next generation of scientists” says EPO president António Campinos.

Sumita grew up in Kolkata, India and obtained her B.Sc from Presidency College and M.Sc. from Science College of the University of Kolkata. She obtained a Ph.D. in organic/polymer chemistry from the University of Michigan. Following a year of Postdoctoral work at Case Western Reserve University she joined 3M Company and worked there for 32 years before retiring. For ten years she was also the Industrial Director of the Minnesota Dental Research Center of Biomaterials and Biomechanics at the University of Minnesota. She and her husband Dr. Smarajit Mitra now run an independent consulting company, Mitra Chemical Consulting LLC. Sumita has received many other honors and awards including being inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame in 2018 the Minnesota Inventors Hall of Fame in 2019, and American Heroes of Chemistry Award in 2009. At present she volunteers in several organizations especially those related to the encouragement of STEM education.



## Vote of Thanks from the Board

I have had the privilege of being the Cultural Chair for BAM for the year 2021 and feel truly honored. I wish to thank the entire BAM BOD 2021 for their belief in me.

But every event is the culmination of teamwork; a group of diligent & hardworking people; and I had the best team beside me helping bring to fruition the task entrusted to me. Thank you team for your time, efforts, valuable insights & guidance.

**Tech Team:** *Sudhansu Jena, Mintu Talukdar, Bidesh Roy, Sandip Nath*



*Ambuja Goswami (Emcee & Communication), Priyanka Shaw ( Emcee & Communication), Tulika Chakraborty ( Emcee & Art Work), Rumi Talukdar (Emcee), Debasmita Mukherjee (Emcee), Satabdi Datta (Emcee)*

A big Thank you to the Sannikat Team: *Koushik Dutta, Ambuja Goswami, Bodhisatya Bhaduri, Arijit Mondal, Aaratrika Mondal.*

A Huge Thank you to the larger BAM community for your relentless support and participation.

Last but in no way the least Thank You *Anish, Shivali & Mishti..* You guys are the best..

**Ipshita Choudhury**  
**Cultural Committee Chair 2021**

I sincerely thank *Shubhodip Niyogi* of the Communications sub-committee for this meticulous work with the complex IT infrastructure of the BAM website. He was instrumental in creating the ticketing system during various BAM events in 2021, and able to quickly resolve occasional technical glitches. ধন্যবাদ শুভদীপ, for all your help and dedication and for being available in very tight schedule. I am grateful to all BAM Board of Directors for their feedback and to the entire BAM Community for support.

**Koushik Dutta**  
**Communications Chair 2021**





I am thankful and grateful to our BAM membership team who have been actively involved in laying out the BAM membership process for the year 2021. This dynamic team has the diverse combination of technical knowledge (*Tanmoy Chakraborty and Bodhisatya Bhaduri*) and active community involvement over several years (*Sourav Bhunia and Subhadip Kumar*). The team is not only heavily involved in engaging the Bengali community of Minnesota but also provides them with the feeling of belonging and social connectedness to our rich traditions. The team is diligently involved in maintaining and managing the membership portal and process throughout the year.

In addition to the official membership sub-committee, I would like to extend my thankful note to *Amlan Ghosh, Snehasish Ghosh and Saumyadip Bagchi* who were the leading architects of the BAM membership portal and transferred the knowledge successfully to the present team.

***“We must find time to stop and thank the people who make a difference in our lives.”- John F. Kennedy***

**Raini Dutta**  
**Membership Committee Chair 2021**

Thank you BAM for giving me the opportunity to serve this great community. Organizing an event is a teamwork. As a first time BOD member, I have received enormous help, support and guidance from my fellow BOD members. I'm really grateful to my team members of Pujo Committee. I sincerely appreciate the efforts of team members: *Anish Choudhury, Rumi Talukdar, Suchismita Basu, Antara Pratihar and Moushumi Maiti*.

A big Thanks to *Ipshita Choudhury(Di)* for constantly motivating me! A big shout out to the greater BAM Community for coming forward every time and making each event successful especially during the unprecedented times. None of the Pujos are possible without Purohits and a Big Thank you to our beloved *Ashok da(Mr. Ashok Chattopadhyay)*, *Smaran Mishra and my husband Sandip* for coming forward to perform the pujas. Saraswati Puja 2021 wouldn't be possible without you all. A big thank you to those who came forward to volunteer in Saraswati Puja and BAM picnic. I am grateful to my family and friends for their support! I would like to Thank the BAM Community in advance for all your support and effort towards our upcoming Durga Puja 2021 event! See you all soon!



**Rikhia Basu**  
**Pujo Committee Chair 2021**





**Sandeep Basu**

**Food Committee Chair 2021**

In these unprecedented times that we have been living for the past one and half year, it has been challenging for everyone in the community balancing work- life along with community events so it was no different for me. Being the food chair for 2021 BAM it was both an honor and pleasure to serve the community. I'm really grateful to my Food subcommittee team for their immense support and help during my tenure this year as Food chair. Really appreciate all the sincere efforts in ensuring that best food is served at optimal cost following safety protocols.

*Avijit Das:* helped with negotiation with vendors and accompanied me to deliver some nice and warm authentic Bengali food on a cold chilly day! He also helped with delivering appetizers in the BAM Picnic!

*Subhadip Niyogi and Golok:* these guys can get best deals in MN when it comes to food!!Helper in getting various options from different vendors for catering in Saraswati Pujo and Picnic!

*Arunava Das, Abhradeep, Golok, Subhadip Niyogi and Saumyadip Bagchi:* For all the support during picnic and events and bringing novel ideas during meetings. Proud to be part of this team!!!As I express my thanks, we are working and leaving no stones unturned for making the DP2021 event at temple, a memorable one.

Saying "Thank you" really matters to me as the food committee team in 2021 helped in making the 2021 limited events successful even with multiple constraints and challenges due to pandemic. Last but not the least, Thanks to the greater BAM Community for coming forward and making the events successful!

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## Celebrating our Grads



**Shivali Choudhury**, daughter of Ipshita and Anish Choudhury, a graduate from Farmington High School is pursuing her Bachelor's Degree at the Carlson school of Management, University of Minnesota.

**Devna Panda**, daughter of Chhanda and Purnendu Panda, a graduate from Eden Prairie High School is pursuing her Bachelor's Degree at the University of Minnesota in Biomedical Engineering.



Congratulations **BAM** Graduates 2021!!



## Kids Achievements



**Name: Shivali Choudhury**

**Parents: Ipshita Choudhury/ Anish Choudhury**

**Shivali** as a sophomore, started a sign language club in her school. In due course of time, the club became very popular as a growing number of students started showing interest in learning sign language. The response was so phenomenal that sign language is now offered as a subject in the Farmington School District.

**Congratulations to Shivali for taking the initiative!**

**Name: Subham Maiti**

**Parents: Ipsita Priyadarshini / Souvik Maiti**

**Subham** competed with peers of his grade (Grade 2) in USA and ranked as below:

Exam\*: Math Kangaroo

State Rank: 2

National Rank: 8

Exam\*: Math Bee (North South Foundation)

State Rank: 1

National Rank\*: 4



*Also, when it comes to Karate*

Tournament: Diamond Nationals

Group: National Karate Schools Intramural (Age 8 and Under)

Division: Empty-Hand Form

Rank: 2

**Congratulations to our young achiever Subham!**



## Album of BAM Events



*Photos: Ipshita Chowdhury*

**Saraswati Puja 2021** : This was the first event of the year. It was a volunteer only event which was casted live.

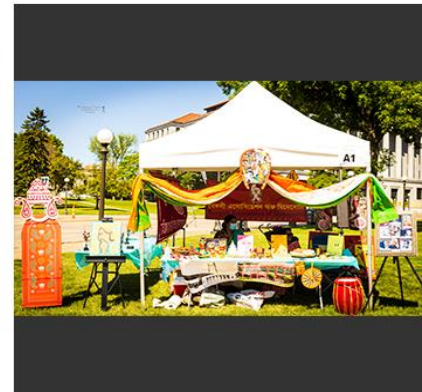




*Photos: Bodhisatya Bhaduri*

**BAM Picnic 2021** : This was the very first In-person event of the year. It was a gala with sumptuous food, extensive socializing and welcoming some new members to the community.





*Photos: Bodhisatya Bhaduri*

**IndiaFEST 2021** : IndiaFEST was held in-person this year. It was a very significant year for the Indian community as August 15th was declared "India Day" by the Minnesota Legislature and it was announced by Rep Ginny Klevorn of Plymouth during this event. The BAM booth ended up winning the trophy for Best Decoration!



মা দূর্গা | Subhra Saha



# গল্প / কবিতা



## শ্রী শ্রী দুর্গা মা আমাদের জীবন সাথী সুধীর নাথ

মা আমার জীবন সাথী সারা দিন মায়ের পথে চলি।  
মায়ের নির্দেশে থাকি নির্দিধায় কোভিড-19 কে ভয় নাহি করি॥

পৃথিবী ছাড়া অন্য গ্রহ নক্ষত্রে জীবন নেই তাতে আক্ষেপ কী।  
এই মর্ত্যে ছিলাম না থাকবো না আমরা সবাই স্বর্গলোকের অধিবাসী॥

মা আমার ভগবান, ত্রিদেবের দেওয়া যৌথ ক্ষমতায় বলবান।  
সব দেবগণের থেকে পাওয়া অস্ত্র ও বাহনে সজ্জিত হয়ে বিরাজমান॥

সারা বৎসরের আকাঙ্ক্ষিত দুর্গাপূজা আমার ভগবানেরই পূজা, ধ্বনিত হয় এই সংবাদ।  
সারা দুনিয়া আনন্দে আত্মহারা পেতে ভগবানের আশীর্বাদ॥

দ্রোতা যুগে শ্রীরাম, সীতা উদ্ধারের জন্য মায়ের পূজা করেন ১০৮-টি পদ্য দিয়ে।  
সীতা শোক দূর করার তরে মা দেখা দেন ত্রিনয়নী ছদ্মবেশে॥

দ্বাপর যুগে মা নবজাতক শ্রীকৃষ্ণের পিতাকে সহায়তা করেন গোকুলে পৌঁছাতে।  
কলি যুগে পাপ-রোগ-শোক থেকে মুক্ত করতে মায়ের অবস্থান সব জায়গায়তে॥

এই ভাবেই মা আমাদের জীবন সাথী তাই কলি যুগ নিকৃষ্ট নহে।  
এসো আমরা মায়ের পূজা করি মনোযোগ দিয়ে মায়ের নির্দেশিত পথে॥

সত্য, দ্রোতা, দ্বাপর যুগে সিদ্ধিলাভ সম্ভব ছিল অনেক বৎসর যোগ সাধনার ফলে।  
কলিযুগে শুধু শ্রীরাম ও শ্রীকৃষ্ণের নাম জপ করে তাহা পাওয়া যায় শ্রীরাধার আশীর্বাদে॥

বিষ্ণুর চার অবতার সত্য যুগে, তিন অবতার দ্রোতা যুগে, দুই অবতার দ্বাপর যুগে।  
যুগে যুগে বিষ্ণুর আবির্ভাব পৃথিবীকে রক্ষা করতে অসুরদের হাত থেকে॥



কলিযুগে শুধু এক অবতার কঙ্কী তাঁরও আবির্ভাব ঘটে নি।  
সত্য যুগে দ্রাবিড় নগর, ত্রেতাতে অযোধ্যা, দ্বাপরে দ্বারকা, কলি যুগে ইউ-এস-এ আশাকরি।  
মায়ের মন্দির মিনেসোটার মেপলগ্রোভে মিসিসিপি নদীর তীরে।  
ভারতের গঙ্গার তীরে দক্ষিণেশ্বর কালীবাড়ির অনুকরণে।  
মিসিসিপি নদী গঙ্গার মতন মায়ের বার্তা ছড়ায় চারিদিকে।  
এসো আমরা মায়ের মন্দিরে যাই মায়ের পথের নির্দেশ শুনতে।





**Uma | Jyotirmoy Roy**

*Watercolor on paper*

## কোনটা বাড়ি

### প্রতীক মণ্ডল

নীল আকাশে সাদা মেঘের দুই লুকোচুরি,  
গাছের ডালে ঐ দেখা যায় শিউলি ফুলের কুঁড়ি,  
কাশফুলের ঐ ঝাঁক, দূরে বাজছে বুঝি ঢাক,  
উমার কোলে ছোট্ট গণেশ দিচ্ছে হামাগুড়ি।

শরৎ এলো, মর্ত্যে এখন সাজো সাজো রব,  
আসছে উমা, বরণডালা হাতে নিয়ে তৈরী থাকো সব,

উমা এখন কৈলাস থেকে দিচ্ছে সবে পাড়ি,  
বছর ঘুরে আসছে ফিরে আবার বাপের বাড়ি।

একইসাথে সেজেগুজে দিচ্ছে খুকী পাড়ি,  
এই প্রথম সে যাবে সোজা ঠাম্মা দাদুর বাড়ি,  
কৈলাসে নয়, খুকী থাকে সাত সাগরের তীরে,  
উড়োজাহাজ পৌঁছে দেবে আকাশের বুক চিরে।

দেখবে প্রথম উমার পূজা কেমন ভাবে হয়,  
ঠাম্মা দাদুর কোলে যেতে তর নাহি যে সয়।

উমা এলি? দেখে তোকে জুড়িয়ে গেলো প্রাণ  
বছরভরের অপেক্ষার আজ হলো অবসান।



বুড়ো বাপের কথা মনে পড়লো এতক্ষনে?  
কটা দিন যে থাকতে বলি, কার কথা কে শোনে?  
দীর্ঘপথের শেষে খুকী দেখলো নয়ন মেলে,  
নতুন দেশের নতুন জিনিস, বড্ড সেকলে।  
ঐতো ঠাম্মি, ঐতো দাদা, হাত বাড়িয়ে আছে,  
নয়তো দূরে, এ যে দেখি অনেক অনেক কাছে!

আনন্দেতে কেটে গেলো দিনগুলো সব দ্রুত,  
বাপের বাড়ির আদরে উমা কৈলাসবিস্মৃত।  
ওদিকে নতুন জামা, নতুন জুতোয় সেজে,  
দাদার ঘাড়ে চেপে খুকী ঘুরলো বেজায় শেষে।  
ঢাকের আওয়াজ, ধূপধুনো আর আলোর রোশনাই,  
উমার সাথে প্রথম দেখা এমনই হওয়া চাই।

সব আলোর শেষে, অন্ধকারের বেশে  
সময়ঘড়ি বিদায়বেলার ঘন্টা বাজায় এসে।  
আর কটা দিন বাপের কাছে থাকলে হতো না রে?  
এটাও বাড়ি, কৈলাসে কি যেতেই হবে ফিরে?  
আবার কবে আসবি খুকী? বুড়ো বুড়ি একা,  
তোকে ছাড়া এই বাড়ি যে বড্ড ফাঁকা ফাঁকা।  
পরেরবারে খুকী তখন অনেক বড় হবি,  
ঠাম্মা দাদা দাদু দিদান, চিনতে পারবি কি?





দিনগুলো তো কেটে গেলো বড্ড তাড়াতাড়ি,  
খুকীর মা শুধায়, খুকী ফিরবি না রে বাড়ি?  
অবাক চোখে তাকায় খুকী, দুচোখে বিস্ময়,  
ভাবছে সে তো, নতুন দেশে এরকমও হয়?  
এই যে সেদিন ঠাম্মা দিদান বললো একগাল হেসে,  
এতদিনে ফিরলে বাড়ি, বিদেশ থেকে এসে।  
তবে যে মা ফিরতে বলে আবার দূরদেশে,  
এতদিনের সফর নাকি শেষ হলো অবশেষে।  
কোনটা বাড়ি কোনটা বাড়ি? খুকীর চোখে জল,  
আমায় বলে দাও গো উমা, তুমিই সম্বল।  
সিঁদুর মেখে, সজল চোখে, উমা বলে ভিড়ের মাঝে  
বলবো কিরে তোকে, আমি নিজেই জানি না যে।  
বিসর্জনের বিদায়বেলায়, অতল গভীর জলে  
কোনটা বাড়ি, কোনটা বাড়ি, উমা আবার খুঁজে চলে।





Cups of Tea | Anjana Parua *Acrylic on canvas*

♪.. আজ আড্ডার তালে তালে  
চাকের আওয়াজ,  
এলো স্মৃতির আঙুল ধরে  
পুজোর মেজাজ ...♪



## সুপাত্রী

### ঈশ্বিতা আঢ়

আজ রবিবার। প্রতিবারের মত চায়ের কাপ হাতে কল্পনা বসে গেছে রবিবাসরীয়া নিয়ে। তার নামের আর স্বভাবের বড়ই সামঞ্জস্য। একমাত্র ছেলে computer engineering-এ সুযোগ পেতে না পেতেই, তার মনের মত বউমা পাওয়ার স্বপ্ন দানা বাঁধতে শুরু করে। কিরকম হবে ছেলের বৌ? অবশ্যই ফর্সা, 5'5", ছিপছিপে গড়ন, গৃহ কর্মে নিপুণ। তবে কল্পনা progressive তাই বৌমা চাকুরীরতা হলেও চলবে। তবে সে চাকুরী ১০টা-৫টা হলেই ভাল। সংসারেও তো মন থাকতে হবে। সমাজে, আত্মীয় পরিজন, বন্ধু বান্ধবের কাছে মাথা যেন উঁচু করে বাঁচা যায়। তাই market research চলছে এখন থেকেই।

সংবরণ, কল্পনার স্বামী, সরকারী কর্মচারী। একেবারেই মাটির মানুষ কিন্তু আধুনিক। ছেলে, বৌকে খুশি রাখতে সদা ব্যস্ত। তাই কল্পনার এই রবিবার সকালের সুপাত্রী খোঁজার অভিযান এবং ছেলের সাথে কোনো মেয়ে বন্ধুকে দেখলে, চোখ রাঙানীকে অলীক কল্পনা বলেই উড়িয়ে দেয়।

মনজয় কল্পনা ও সংবরণের একমাত্র সন্তান। ভীষনই ভাল মানুষ হয়েছে, ভীষন caring, পড়াশোনায় ভাল, good looking, আবার বেশ রসিক মানুষ। তাই বন্ধুমহলে খুব popular। বেশ চলছিল তার কলেজ জীবন। মায়ের সন্দেহ বাতিককে, অতি ভালবাসা বলে উড়িয়ে দিত। কলেজে মেয়েরাও খুব পছন্দ করত। কিন্তু কাউকেই বন্ধুর

বেশী মনে হয়নি কখনও। কিন্তু Architecture Department-এর একটা মেয়েকে দেখলে heart-beat টা কিরকম fast হয়ে যেত। College fest-এ আলাপ, কিন্তু মেয়েটা বড়ই উন্মাসিক। তাই বন্ধুত্বও হয়নি।

ধুপছায়া, এক কথায় বেশ সুন্দরী। তার বাবা বিনয় নামী উকিল। কলকাতায় সবাই এক নামে চেনে। মা মহামায়া গৃহবধু। ধুপছায়া তাদের একমাত্র সন্তান। তার বাবা মা প্রকৃত অর্থে প্রগতিশীল। তাই মেয়েকে তারা কখনই ছেলের মত মানুষ করতে চাইনি। মানুষের মত মানুষ করার চেষ্টা করেছে। স্বচ্ছল পরিবারের একমাত্র সন্তান হওয়ার জন্য বেশ pampered। সুন্দরী হওয়ায় এবং মায়ের সতর্কিকরণে school, college-এ বরাবর অতিসচেতন থেকেছে। তাই কোনো ছেলের সাথে বন্ধুত্ব হয়নি। বাবার কেসের গল্প শুনতে শুনতে ভয়ই হত। তাই বন্ধুমহলে উন্মাসিক হওয়ার তকমা লেগেছিল তার।

এরপর college-এ পড়তে পড়তে ধুপছায়ার মনের ছায়া গুলো কাটতে থাকে। চার বছর engineering college-এ অনেক টানা-পোরেন কাটিয়ে সব ছায়া কাটিয়ে মনজয় ধুপের মন জয় করেই নেয়। তারপর দুজনেরই চাকুরি জীবনের সূচনা হয়। মা যে সহজে তাদের সম্পর্ক মেনে নিতে পারবে না জানত বলে মনজয় কোনদিনই তাদের কথা বাড়িতে জানায়নি। বাবা হয়ত বুঝত। মা চাকুরি পাওয়ার পর থেকেই বিয়ের তাড়া দিতে থাকত। তাই এক বছর পর দুজনেই বাড়িতে বিয়ের কথা জানাতে বাধ্য হল।



ধুপছায়া না পারে রান্নাবান্না, না কোন ঘরের কাজ।  
বিয়ের পর সব করতেই হবে জেনে মা বরাবর নিজের জীবন  
enjoy করতে দিয়েছে। চাকরি আর চুটিয়ে প্রেম, আজকাল  
বাবা মায়ের সাথেও দিনের শেষে dinner table-এ দেখা হয়।  
তাই স্বাভাবিক ভাবেই সে কল্পনার সুপাত্রী মোটেই না।  
বন্ধুহলে নাক একদম কাটা যাবে, তাও একমাত্র ছেলের মুখ  
চেয়ে বহু মনকষ্ট নিয়ে মেনে নিল। বিয়ে সুসম্পন্ন হল। তবুও  
রোজকার মনমালিন্যে তাদের বিবাহজীবন তিক্ত হয়ে উঠছিল।  
এমন সময় মনজয়ের Australia-তে long-term onsite  
opportunity চলে এল। বাধ্য হয়ে ধুপছায়াকে চাকরী ছাড়তে  
হল।

এখন তাদের Australia-তে দশবছর কেটে গেছে।  
ধুপছায়া এখন দুই সন্তানের মা। চাকরীও চলছে সমান তালে।  
যদিও work from home তাও কাজের লোকের অভাবে  
নিজেই সংসার, রান্নাবান্না থেকে দুই বাচ্চার পড়াশোনা  
একাহাতে সামলে বেশ হিমশিম অবস্থা হয়। মনজয় যদিও  
সাহায্য করে অনেক। তাও বেশ challenging। এত পরিশ্রমের  
মাঝেও যখন বাচ্ছারা এসে জড়িয়ে ধরে বলে you are the  
best mumma in the whole world, তখন তার সমস্ত  
পরিশ্রম সার্থক বলে মনে হয়। সবাই সুপাত্রী নাহয় নাই হল,  
কিন্তু সবাই হোক এই দুনিয়ার the best mumma.



♪.. রূপং দেহি,  
জয়ং দেহি..♪



♪.. যশো দেহি,  
দ্বিষো জহি..♪

মা শক্তি



কালী

Artist: Ipsita Priyadarshini



যোগিনী

## দুগ্ধা দুগ্ধা

### প্রতীক মণ্ডল

কৈলাসে এখন সাজোসাজো রব, বাইরের পরিবেশ রৌদ্রকরোজ্জ্বল হলেও মহাদেবের ঘরে বেশ গুমোট আবহাওয়া। কর্তা গিন্মিতে সকাল সকালই একদফা ঝগড়া হয়ে গেছে, একেবারে বজ্রবিদ্যুৎসহ বৃষ্টিপাত। আপাতত আকাশ মেঘলা, তবে দফায় দফায় বৃষ্টির ভালোই সম্ভাবনা রয়েছে। ঝগড়ার কারণ খুবই সাধারণ, উমার বাপের বাড়ি যাওয়ার জিনিসপত্র গোছানোয় মহাদেবের কোনো সাহায্য না করা। এমনিতেই গাঁজার ঘোরে মাথা ঝিমঝিম, তারপর এই সকাল সকাল উমার রুদ্ররূপে মহাদেবের একেবারে নাজেহাল অবস্থা।

“সারাদিন গাঁজা খেয়ে পড়ে থাকো, বলে বলে মুখ ব্যথা হয়ে গেছে, তবু সহ্য করে নিয়েছি। আজ বাদে কাল বেরোবো, একবছর পর যাচ্ছি, তা একটুতো গোছগাছে সাহায্য করো! নন্দী ভূঙ্গি সব গেলো কই, যতসব অকস্মার ঢেঁকি, ডাকো ওদের!”

আর ছেলেমেয়েগুলো বড় হচ্ছে, এবার একটু ওদের কথা ভাবো!”

উমার তর্জনগর্জনে বিপর্যস্ত মহাদেব মিনমিনে গলায় বললেন, “হ্যাঁ হ্যাঁ ওদের ডাকছি, আসলে সকাল থেকে ব্রহ্মা বারবার ফোন করছে, কাজের খুব চাপ। মর্ত্যে কি একটা ভয়ঙ্কর রোগ এসেছে না, ভক্তদের আবেদনে আমার আর ব্রহ্মার নাজেহাল অবস্থা। ভক্তদের জলঢালার চোটে আমার একটু ঠাণ্ডাও লেগেছে। শোনো, তুমি কিন্তু মাস্ক নিয়ে যেও।”

ওদিকে দুই বোনেতে চলছে খুনসুটি, কে কোন শাড়ি আর তার সাথে কোন মানানসই মাস্ক নেবে।

“আচ্ছা লক্ষী, তুই বল, এই হাতে বই নিয়ে যাওয়াটা কি আদৌ প্রয়োজন? তার বদলে একটা ল্যাপটপ বা ট্যাবলেট নিলে কি বেশি স্টাইলিশ হতোনা! এমনিতেও এখন সব অনলাইন ক্লাস আর অনলাইন পড়াশুনা, আমায় পুরোনো আমলের ভেবে সবাই হাসবে দেখিস।”



সরস্বতীর সুরে সুর মিলিয়ে লক্ষীরও আক্ষেপ, “হ্যাঁ রে, আমাকেও এই একটা ভাঁড় নিয়ে যেতে হয়, কি সেকলে! এখন কি সব ই-ওয়ালেট, অনলাইন ট্রান্সফার, বিটকয়েন না কিসব বেরিয়েছে, সেসব তো চোখেও দেখা যায়না, ছোঁয়া যায়না, আমার ভাঁড় দেখে আমার পেঁচাটাও হাসে!”

অন্যদিকে শেষদফার প্রস্তুতিতে ব্যস্ত দুই ভাইও।

“এই দাদা, দ্যাখ না আমার গুঁড়ের মাপের মাস্কটা বিশ্বকর্মা বানালো কিনা, হাতে সময় নেই।”

গণেশের আবদারে বিরক্ত কার্তিক বললো, “এই দ্যাখ, শরীরটা একটু নাড়া, দেখছিসনা আমি ফেসবুক টুইটার এইসব ব্যাপার একটু বোঝার চেষ্টা করছি! ব্যায়াম করে শরীরটা এরকম বানালাম, লোকজনকে একটু দেখাতে হবেনা! এবার মর্ত্যে সুন্দরী মেয়েদের নজর সব আমার দিকেই থাকবে, বুঝলি?”

–“সে তো বুঝলাম দাদা, তবে সুন্দরীদের থেকে সামাজিক দূরত্ব বজায় রাখিস, নাহলে মাকে তো তুই চিনিসই! মর্ত্যে কিসব কিটো ডায়েট ফায়েট

বেরিয়েছে, আমি ওটা জেনে আসবো, পরেরবারের মধ্যে এ ভুঁড়ি আমি কমিয়ে ফেলবোই দেখিস!”

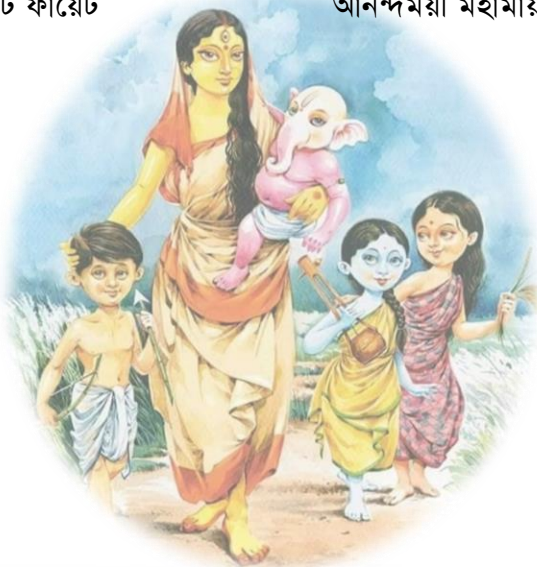
অবশেষে ব্যস্ত দিন শেষ হলো। পরদিন সকাল সকাল নন্দী ভূঙ্গী যথারীতি হাজির।

“মা জননী সাবধানে যাবেন, সাবধানে থাকবেন। আর কিছু মনে করবেন না, কর্তামশাই বললেন আপনারা ফেরার পর চোদ্দদিন কি একটা থাকবেন, আমার ঠিক মনে নেই, কো কো করেন্টিন না কি একটা, কর্তামশাই আপনাকে বলতে সংকোচ করছিলেন, তাই আমায় দিয়ে...”

–“হ্যাঁ তাই বলো, আর সংকোচ না, বলো কর্তামশাইয়ের ভয়। যাইহোক, সব ব্যবস্থা করে রাখবে বুঝলে? আর তোমাদের ভরসায় রেখে যাচ্ছি, ওসব ছাইপাঁশ কম খাবে, মাথায় থাকে যেন।”

–“হ্যাঁ মা জননী, আপনারা এবার বেরিয়ে পড়ুন ভালোয় ভালোয়, দুগ্গা দুগ্গা...”

“আশ্বিনের শারদ প্রাতে বেজে উঠেছে আলোকমঞ্জির; ধরণীর বহিরাকাশে অন্তর্হিত মেঘমালা; প্রকৃতির অন্তরাকাশে জাগরিত জ্যোতির্ময়ী জগন্মাতার আগমন বার্তা; আনন্দময়ী মহামায়ার পদধ্বনি।”





*Durga Puja in COVID* | Debanjana Chatterjee

*Digital Art*





## পুজোর পিছুটান

### দেবাজ্ঞনা চ্যাটার্জী

আকাশ, সবুজ,  
সবকিছু ছুঁয়ে ছিল মন।  
দূরে একটা প্রজাপতি  
সাক্ষী ছিল ওদের  
আপন করে নেওয়ার অঙ্গীকারে।  
দূরে থাকার অনুতাপের সন্ধীক্ষনে  
ছুঁয়ে দিয়েছিল ইউক্যালিপটাসের  
দু একটা ছেঁড়া পাতা,  
তারপরই দামাল হাওয়া...  
না চুল ওড়েনি, ওদের  
এলোমোলো হওয়ার অনুমতি দেয়নি  
শক্ত করে বেঁধে রাখা পিছুটান।  
দূর থেকে দূরে গিয়ে; পাহাড়টার ওপারে  
নীল হয়ে যাচ্ছিল দুটো মেঘ -  
একটা শরতের, অন্যটা বর্ষার,  
ভাললাগাগুলো ছুঁয়ে যাচ্ছিল আলতো করে,  
একটুকরো স্মৃতিমেদুরতা  
রঙ মিশিয়ে যায় না দেখা ছবিটায়,  
আর আশপাশ ভরপুর হয়ে ওঠে  
চেনা চেনা ধুনোর গন্ধে,  
চোখ বন্ধ করলে শুনতে পাই  
ঢাকটা বাজছে এখনও, ডাকছে কি আমায়?  
কাশফুল ফোটে না এখানে,  
তবুও অজান্তে ছুঁয়ে ফেলেছি কখন-  
মা, তোমায়!



## প্রবাসীর পূজো

### দেবাজ্ঞনা চ্যাটার্জী

আসবে পূজো বছর ঘুরে ফের,  
আসবে আবার কাশের আঘ্রাণ,  
আমরা কোথায় থাকব কে বা জানে?  
কোরোনা যুঝে বিক্ষত কত প্রাণ-

পূজোর নেশা এখনো গায় মাথা,  
তোমার আমেজ আলতো মনে পড়ে-  
বিসর্জনের রঙে সিঁদুর খেলা,  
বিষন্নতা বৃষ্টি হয়ে ঝড়ে।

ধুনি নাচেও থাকত প্রতিশ্রুতি,  
এইতো জীবন কেবল আসা যাওয়া!  
প্রণাম করার সুযোগ না হয় যদি  
বছর বছর এসএমএস এই সারব বিজয়া ॥



## এক অন্য প্রেমের গল্প

ঈশিতা চক্রবর্তী ভাদুড়ী

সিদ্ধার্থ, বয়স ২৮; মিনিয়াপলিস এ চাকরি সূত্রে আসা। ৮ বছর আমেরিকাতে থেকেও পুজোর সময়টা তার মনে হয়ে কলকাতায় যাই। কিন্তু এবার মহামারীর জ্বলায় সে যখন হবেই না, বন্ধুরা মিলে ঠিক করলো যাবে Yosemite National Park। পেনে সান-ফ্রান্সিসকো, সেখান থেকে গাড়ি ভাড়া। তাতে থাকছে হাইকিং, বাইকিং, রক ক্লাইম্বিং এই সবই... তবে তার সাথেও যে আরো একটা অবিশ্বাস্য অভিজ্ঞতা তার হতে চলেছে, সেটার বিন্দু মাত্র আঁচ পেলেও সে হয়তো যেত না!

দিন ১

হোটেলের নাম Majestic Yosemite Hotel, ঘর থেকেই দেখা যায় Yosemite Falls! চেক-ইন করে ঘরের দিকে যাওয়ার সময় সিদ্ধার্থ দেখলো একটি মেয়ে একদৃষ্টে বারান্দা থেকে জলপ্রপাতের অপূর্ব দৃশ্য দেখছে। ওদের আওয়াজ পেয়ে ঘুরে তাকালো। তার চোখের চাউনিতে যেন লুকিয়ে আছে অনেক কথা। মূঢ় হেসে অন্য দিকে চলে গেল মেয়েটি।

এর পর সারাদিন ঘুরে রাতে যখন হোটেল ঢুকলো, আবার দেখা সেই মেয়েটির সাথে। এবার কিন্তু সে হেসে জিজ্ঞেস করলো “Hi, What’s your name?”, সিদ্ধার্থ নিজের পরিচয় দিলো “Sid” বলে আর সেখান থেকে শুরু ওদের আলাপ।

সারাদিনের ক্লাস্তিতে যে কখন সে ঘুমিয়েছে জানেনা। হটাৎ তার ঘুম ভাঙলো বাথরুমে জলের শব্দে... ঘড়িতে তখন রাত ২:৪৫। বাথরুম এ গিয়ে আলোর সুইচ টিপলো সিদ্ধার্থ, কিন্তু

তাও জ্বললো না আলো। আন্দাজে কলের কাছে হাত নিতেই সে দেখলো যে জল পড়ছে না। ভারী অবাক কাণ্ড! জল নেই অথচ শব্দ কিসের? ঘুমিয়ে ভুল শুনেছে সে, এই ভেবে আবার শুয়ে পড়লো গিয়ে। সেই শব্দ চললো সারা রাত ধরে।

দিন ২

আজকের প্ল্যান ছিল হাইকিং এর। ঘরে যাওয়ার সময় আবার দেখা সেই মেয়েটির সাথে। নাম তার এমিলি, গতকালই জেনেছে সে। সে জানতে চাইলো “How did you spend your day, Emily?”... উত্তর এলো, “Just Relaxing”। আসলে বেড়ানোটা সম্পূর্ণ আপেক্ষিক। কেউ রিল্যাক্স করে, কেউ এক্সপ্লোর করে, আবার কেউ কেউ ক্যামেরার লেন্স দিয়ে দৃশ্যবন্দী করে রাখে পুরো জিনিস টাকে। আজ এমিলির সাথে তার কথা হলো অনেকক্ষণ। সে বললো কলকাতার কথা, তার মা-বাবার কথা। বলতে বলতে একটু আবেগপ্রবণ হয়ে পড়লো সিড। তার হাতটা আলতো করে ধরলো এমিলি সান্ত্বনা দেওয়ার জন্য। তখন সিড দেখলো কত ঠান্ডা তার হাত। জিজ্ঞাসা করতে ও বললো ওর নাকি ঠান্ডা লাগছে বাইরে, যদিও আজ দিনটা বেশ গরমই ছিল! আজ কিন্তু ঘরে যাওয়ার আগে সিড চেয়ে বসলো এমিলির নম্বর। উত্তরে এমিলি বললো: “Don’t worry, we’re friends now, will give it before you leave”।



ক্লান্ত শরীর বিছানাতে পড়তেই মিলিয়ে গেলো ঘুমে।  
 কিন্তু আবার যেন সে শুনতে পাচ্ছে সেই জলের শব্দ! আজ  
 আর কষ্ট করলো না, ধরেই নিলো জলের লাইনে গভগোল।  
 কিছু সময় পর আবার ঘুম ভাঙলো তার। একি কাণ্ড, ঘরের  
 বাতিটা জ্বলছে যে! তার দুই বন্ধু রাজেশ ও পিটার এর  
 মধ্যেই কেউ উঠে জ্বালিয়ে রেখেছে এই ভেবে শুতেই যাবে,  
 এমন সময় মনে হলো যেন দরজাটা অল্প খোলা কি অবাक  
 কাণ্ড, দরজা যে সে বন্ধ করেছে এটা তার পরিষ্কার মনে  
 আছে। যাইহোক দরজা আবার বন্ধ করে সে ঘুমিয়ে পরলো।

### দিন ৩

আজকে তাদের সাইকেল ভাড়া করে বাইকিং এ যাওয়ার  
 পরিকল্পনা। রাজেশ ও পিটার এর সাথে কথা বলে মিটলো  
 না গত রাতের রহস্য, তাই আর সময় নষ্ট না করে বেরিয়ে  
 পড়লো ওরা। বিকালে সাইকেল ফেরত দেওয়ার সময়  
 আবার দেখা হয়ে গেল এমিলির সাথে। সেও নাকি খুব  
 বাইকিং ভালোবাসে। তারপর দুজনেই নিজেদের প্যাশন  
 নিয়ে আলোচনা করতে থাকলো আর ক্রমেই তারা বেশ  
 ঘনিষ্ঠ হয়ে পড়লো। সিড এমিলি কে কথাও দিয়ে ফেললো  
 যে সে শিকাগো গেলে দেখা করবে।

ক্লান্ত শরীর, ঘুমটা সবে আসছে এমন সময় আবার সেই  
 শব্দ! যাঃ, ভুলে গেছে সে ম্যানেজারকে জানাতে যে জলের  
 লাইন খারাপ। এর পর হঠাৎ জ্বলে উঠলো ঘরের বাতি! আর  
 থাকতে না পেরে সে ডেকে তুললো বন্ধুদের। অনেক চেষ্টা  
 করেও নেভাতে পারলো না আলোটা। এদিকে ওদের  
 মোবাইলগুলো বন্ধ।

কি অবাक কাণ্ড! সবার ফোন একসাথে বন্ধ হয় কিভাবে?  
 তাছাড়া ঘরের একটা জানালা খোলা, ওগুলো তো নিজে  
 হাতে বন্ধ করেছিল সিড! ঠিক করলো ব্যাপারটা  
 ম্যানেজারকে জানাবে। ঘরটা বেশ অন্ধুত আর একটু  
 ভৌতিক ও বটে! আর দেরি না করে সবাই ফোন চার্জ এ  
 বসিয়ে ওই আলোর মধ্যেই ঘুমিয়ে পরলো।

### দিন ৪

আজ সব গুছিয়ে বেরোনোর সময় ওরা দেখলো ফোন সেই  
 বন্ধ। বেরোনোর আগে একবার এমিলি কে বিদায় জানাবে  
 বলে তার ঘরে বেল বাজালো সিড। কিন্তু কোনো উত্তর না  
 পেয়ে চেক-আউট করে ওরা ম্যানেজার কে খুলে বললো  
 গত তিন রাতের সব অন্ধুত ঘটনাগুলো। সব শুনে উনি  
 জিজ্ঞেস করলেন ওদের পাশের ঘরে “Emily” নামে কেউ  
 ছিল কিনা। সিড জানালো যে ছিল এবং তার সাথে ভালো  
 আলাপ ও হয়ে গেছে। আর কথা বাড়ালেন না ম্যানেজার।  
 পার্ক ছাড়তেই ফোনগুলো চালু হয়ে গেলো। কি অবাक কাণ্ড!

এর পর এক মাস কেটে গেল। হঠাৎ একটি email এলো।  
 সেটি পরে রক্ত হীম হয়ে গেল তার। খানিকটা এরকম:

“Dear Sid,

আমি মার্জেন্টিক হোটেল এর ম্যানেজার মাইক। আপনাদের  
 সেদিন কিছু কথা গোপন করে গিয়েছিলাম। ১২ বছর আগে  
 Emily নামে একটি মেয়ে তার boyfriend জর্জ এর  
 সাথে আপনাদের পাশের কামরা, অর্থাৎ রুম ৩১৩-তে ওঠে।  
 সেখানে থাকাকালীন তাদের মধ্যে মতবিবাদ হয়ে এবং  
 এমিলি আত্মহত্যা করেন। তারপর থেকে ঘরটি বন্ধ রাখা হয়।  
 শোনা যায় মাঝে মাঝে নাকি অনেকে তাকে দেখে এবং  
 কথাও বলে। এর কোনো প্রমাণ না থাকায় কিছু করা  
 আমাদের পক্ষে সম্ভব হয়নি। আপনাদের উদ্বেগের জন্য  
 আমরা দুঃখিত।

ইতি,

Mike Miller”

কিছুটা ভয় কাটার পর এমিলির চোখ মনে পড়লো সিড এর।  
 তার মনে হলো এমিলি হয়তো এখনও একজন মনের মানুষ  
 খুঁজে যাচ্ছে। সিদ্ধার্থ নির্বাক...





মা দূর্গা | Anjana Parua

Gouche on Paper



## অন্য পুজো

### প্রতীক মণ্ডল

বাবা মা সাধ করে নাম রেখেছিলো দুর্গা,  
ভেবেছিলো এ মেয়ে করবে জীবনের সব অসুরবধ,  
হঠাৎ একদিন দুর্ঘটনায় কাটা গেলো দুটি পা,  
তারপর কেটে গেছে বহুদিন, পেরিয়েছে অনেকটা পথ।  
দুর্গা এখন মালা গাঁথে, দশহাতে নয়, দুই হাতে,  
লড়াই আজও ছাড়েনি তবু, জীবনের ঘাত প্রতিঘাতে।

গণেশ এখন ব্যস্ত বড়, মণ্ডপে সে বাজায় ঢাক,  
কলকাতার এক মস্ত পুজোয়, অনেক তার নামডাক,  
এই গণেশের নেইকো ভুঁড়ি, শীর্ণকায় দুইটি হাত,  
প্রানপণে শুধু বাজিয়ে চলে, নেইকো থামার অজুহাত।

সরস্বতী নামটি হলেও, নামের বানান জানেনা সে,  
মা বাপ ছিল দিনমজুর, তাই স্কুলের ভাগ্য হয়নি যে,  
সরস্বতী এখন বই নয়, দীঘির জলে পদ্ম তোলে, মায়ের  
পুজোয় ডালা সাজায়, প্রদীপ মিষ্টি ফুলে ফলে।

লক্ষীর হাতে ভাঁড় কই আর, লক্ষী এখন কার বাড়ি  
ঘর মোছে, বাসন মাজে, দুহাত চলে তাড়াতাড়ি,  
মাস গেলে অল্প কিছু, শখ আহ্লাদ সব বারণ,  
পুজোর মাসে বাড়তি কিছু, একটুখানি খুশির কারণ।

এই কার্তিকের নেইকো জৌলুস, চেহারা তার বড্ড মলিন,  
কোনোরকম পেট চলে, দারিদ্র অভাব সীমাহীন,  
পুজোর কদিন বেচবে বেগুন, মেলায় বিক্রি হবে বেশ,  
পুজো শেষেই আবার আঁধার, মিলিয়ে যাবে আলোর রেশ।

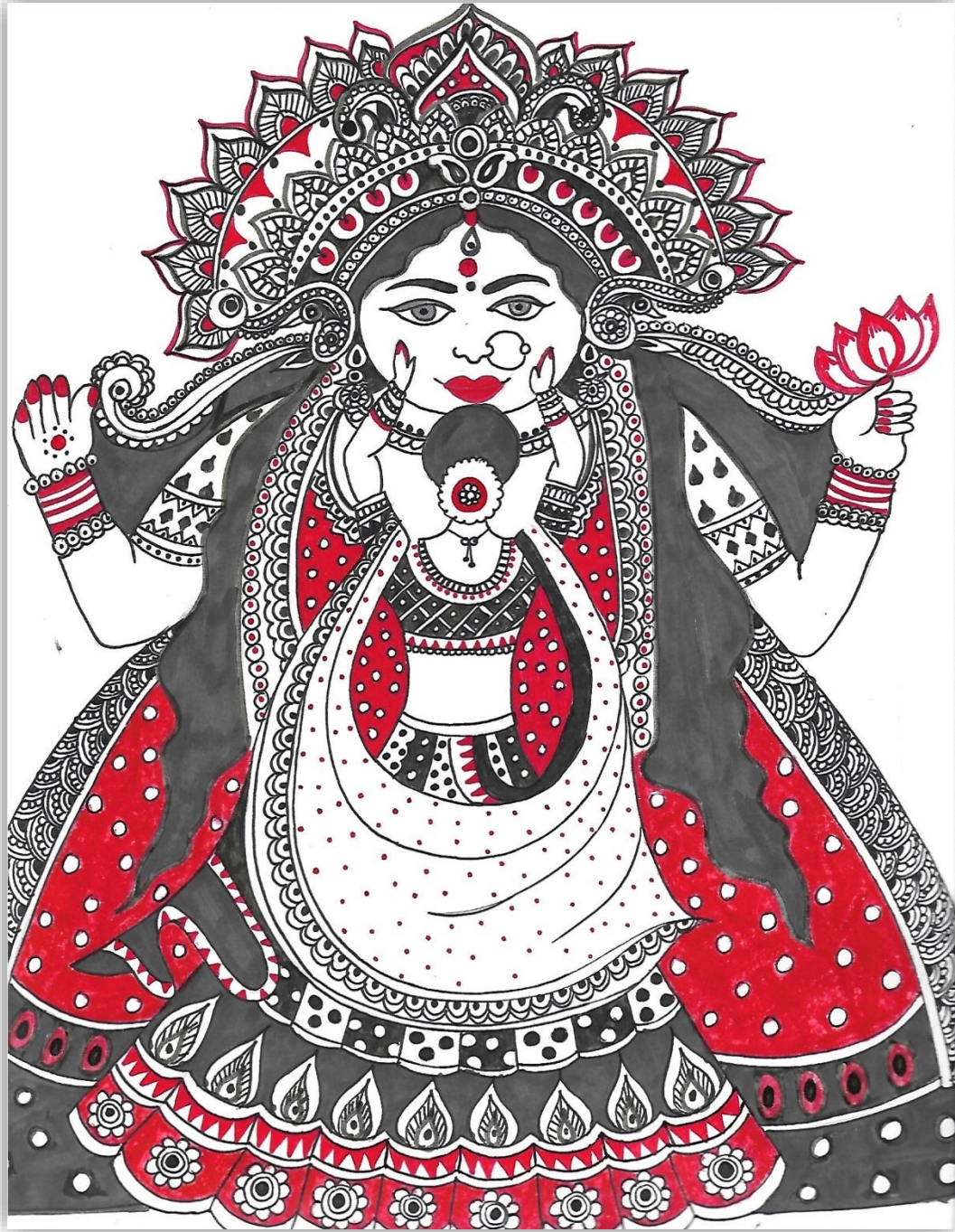
উমা তুই আসিস আবার, বছর বছর বারংবার,

পুজো এলে এই মানুষগুলোর হয় যে বড়োই উপকার,

পুজোর মাঝে আছে অন্য আরেক পুজো, সবার পুজো সমান কি  
হয়?

দুর্গা কার্তিক লক্ষী গণেশ সবাই আছে, কাল্পনিক কেও নয়॥





আবাহন | Ipsita Priyadarshini



# কিশলয়

Children's  
Section



*Photograph: Bodhisatya Bhaduri*



# Flower

Mihira Mitra | 6 Yrs

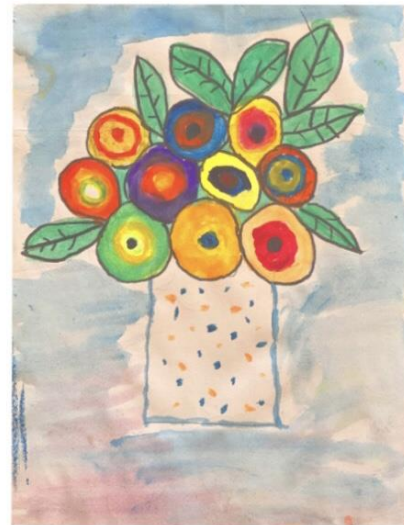
Flower flower, I like you  
Purple, pink, red, blue,  
orange, and yellow hue.  
When the sun shines,  
you get your yummy food!  
Honey bees love to sit on you,  
but they won't sting you!



Mihira Mitra | 6 Yrs



Anurima Choudhury | 5 Yrs



Prishita Samanta | 7 Yrs





## A New Beginning

### Sruti Bhattacharjee | 7 Yrs

The birdies chirp, the squirrels climb,  
The bunnies play and the sun shines bright.  
Everyone has a happy life .....  
I try my best to make it right,  
Is there a future for me?

The trees swing happily,  
The sun sets with peace,  
The wolves howl from a distance  
And it seems to me,  
That the day ends for me....

There was a time  
When everything was fine  
My bird Lulu, and me  
Were always glee

Once, I let her fly free  
To my utter surprise,  
An arrow shot her  
And on my lap fell she

My tears rolled  
I put her to rest in our backyard  
And bid her goodbye.  
With a promise that we will be friends forever...

Since that day, I have never been happy.  
I don't need some fancy skaters,  
I just want my old friend  
to come back to me



**Sruti Bhattacharjee | 7 Yrs**

My birthday comes, I open my gift,  
a shining bird opens her eyes  
and it seems to me,  
Lulu has a daughter named Lily!

I hugged her exactly how I treated Lulu..  
I was so happy that my tears fell.  
I will love you always  
forever be well





Ronak Raxit | 7 Yrs



Krrish Basu | 8 Yrs



Prishita Samanta | 7 Yrs



## Animal Listener

Subham Maiti | 8 Yrs

Hello friends, my name is Dr. Fred Hunter, an animal behavior scientist at Richardson Nature Center in Minnesota, USA.

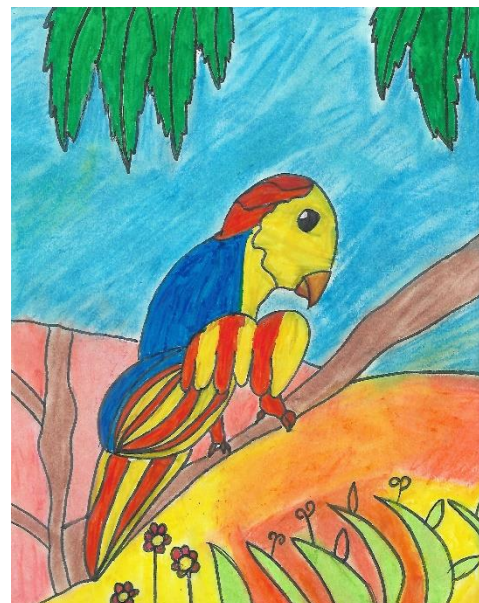
Today (May 27, 2050), I invented a miracle pill after many trials which, once taken, will give the power to understand dog talk. I have swallowed the pill to test it on me. If it works, my dream of helping the animals around the world will come true.

Next day, I woke up hearing, "I'm hungry, give me food!" repeatedly. I opened my eyes to find my dog Lucy asking for food. I was surprised but then realized that my pill was working. I was able to understand my dog and felt crazy. I didn't show my excitement to my family as it was a secret project. "Hey buddy, I'm able to understand you. Don't tell anyone. Shhh....", I said to Lucy and went to the kitchen to give him cereal. I got ready for my morning jog and went out with Lucy. I didn't know that another surprise was awaiting. I was able to understand other animals including cats and birds. I started jumping in the middle of the road, attracting other passersby. Lucy also started jumping with me saying, "Why are you jumping, man! Have you gone crazy?". This embarrassed me, so I stopped jumping and came back home.

After completing my morning chores, I left for my laboratory. As I was thinking on how to reveal this exciting news to my boss, I heard from passing by sparrows that they had seen a group of poachers near Crystal Lake. I immediately alerted the anti-poaching team about the possible attempt by the poachers. I said, "Please send a team immediately, engage a few spy drones near the target location. We will be in touch with our walkie-talkies." I changed my driving direction towards the lake and kept my ears open for some more clues. I came to know that a herd of moose are also on the way to the lake from a running wild cat. After some

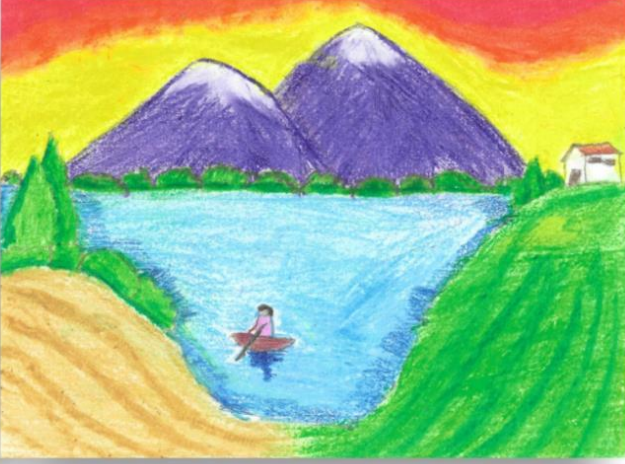
time, I met the team a little far from the lake so that the poachers wouldn't become alert.

We looked into the video feed but no success. It seemed like the poachers were well camouflaged. We all started walking slowly forward without any clue. Just when we were getting tense about not being able to track the poachers before they hurt the animals, I got a tip from my squirrel friend sitting on the top of a tree. He mentioned that he saw the intruders beside the bushes close to the big aspen tree. I instantly let the team know. The team attacked the poachers just in time as they were about to fire. The officers immediately hand-cuffed them and took them away to the nearest prison. The leader asked me, "How do you know they were here?". I smiled and winked my eyes towards the squirrel at the tree top smiling.



Subham Maiti | 8 Yrs





♪.. কৈলাশ মোদের বাপের বাড়ি  
এসেছি পার্বতী ..♪

Aarushi Adhikari | 7 Yrs

♪.. সঙ্গে গনেশ কার্তিক  
আর লক্ষ্মী সরস্বতী ..♪



Aarushi Adhikari | 7 Yrs





Subham Maiti | 8 Yrs

♪.. ধনধান্যে পুষ্পে এবার  
সাজাবো উৎসব ...♪

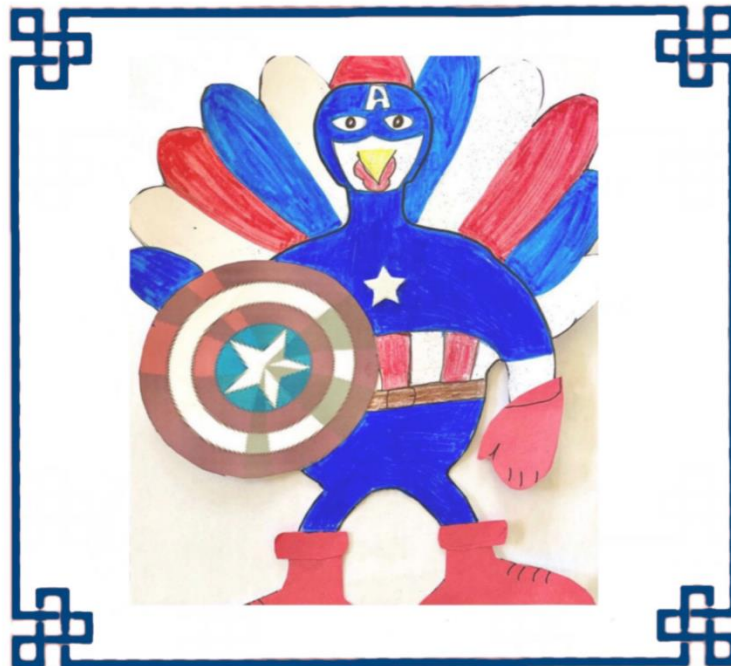


Subham Maiti | 8 Yrs





Adri Das | 13 Yrs



Krrish Basu | 8 Yrs



## Danger in D.C.

### Sourish Majumder | 10 Yrs

Jaden, Austin, and Kate were in Washington D.C. Their friend, Marco, had his painting stolen! The three of them, along with Police Officer Jonathan Jackson, had been trying to figure out what had happened for 2 days now. Officer Jackson said he had some prime suspects, two cousins, Mr. Quincy and Mr. Gilbert.

Mr. Sullivan, the owner of the hotel in which the robbery had occurred, was very surprised and had hired the D.C. Police Department for this case. Marco was very frustrated, but Jaden, Austin, and Kate were constantly making efforts to comfort him in some way. On Friday, Jaden, Austin, and Kate were sitting in the hotel lobby discussing what could've happened. Then, Marco came. He said, "I think Mr. Sullivan stole my painting! He was so nervous when I looked at him. The cousins don't seem nervous at all. In fact, I feel like they're confident they have nothing to do with this robbery."

Throughout the afternoon, from 2:30 - 5:00 PM, the 4 kids discussed possibilities. Then, at 5:15, Austin had a great thought. He thought that Mr. Sullivan hired the cousins for money. That night, it was all over. Mr. Sullivan was in jail. The cousins were forgiven but still fined.

The President thanked Austin, Jaden, Kate, and Marco for making sure mayhem didn't rise in D.C. He gave all four of them a medal, and some cake.

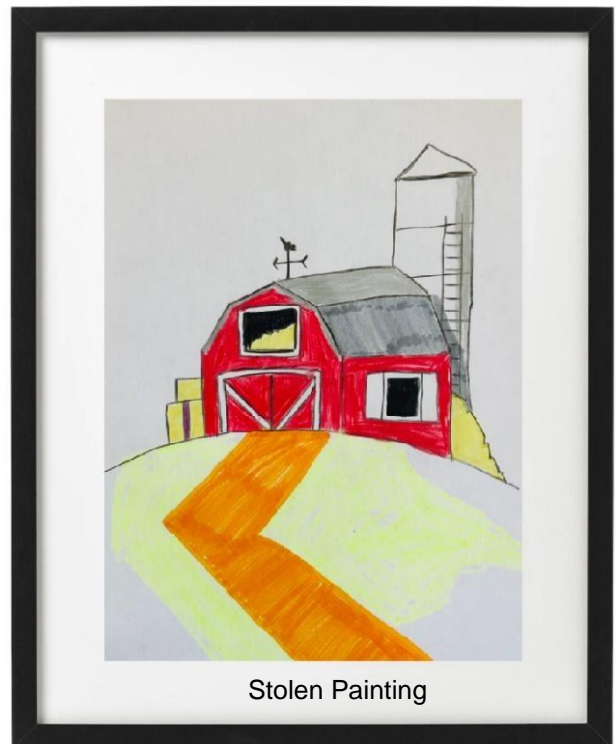


Illustration: Sourish Majumder



Ahana Das | 14 Yrs



Hiya Ghosh | 6 Yrs



Mishti Choudhury | 10 Yrs



Satvika Das | 5 Yrs



## Terraforming the Moon

Subham Maiti | 8 Yrs

Did you ever wonder how exciting it would be to have another planet like Earth? I have often imagined myself as an Astronaut and an Architect terraforming the Moon in the future. "Terraform" means to transform (a planet) so that it resembles the earth, by supporting human life.

In my imagination, my friends and I space traveled in a rocket called CS-10000 to reach the Moon. The CS-10000 carried construction supplies.

I supervised the construction of a water factory, a staircase farm, and a hospital. On the surface of the moon, we found basalt and craters. We made a dome on the moon that maintains gravity and temperature to help in human survival. We got a beautiful glimpse of the rising earth from here as well.

Finally, there will be life on the Moon which will be a great achievement for mankind and science.



Illustration: Subham Maiti





Subhangee Das | 11 Yrs

♪.. দুর্গে দুর্গে  
দুর্গতিনাশিনী ..♪



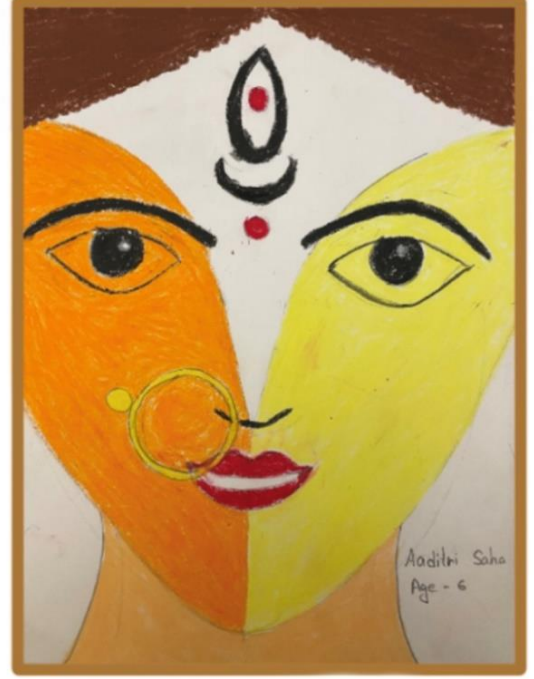
Pritha Das | 6 Yrs



♪.. মহিষাসুরমর্দিনী  
জয় মা দুর্গে..♪



Asmita Chakraborty | 6 Yrs



Aaditri Saha | 6 Yrs



## Gardening Year Round

Ayushmita Mondal | 8 Yrs

Gardening is a great hobby for everyone in my family. We are always doing something for our plants. We have flowers blooming all year long, even in winter! Come along with me to see what we do in the garden. Every year one of our grandparents comes and helps us make it better. Since last year, they couldn't come due to coronavirus, so we have been trying it ourselves.

After a long Minnesota winter, as finally spring approaches, days get longer and a bit warmer. That's the time when we start seeing blue, green, yellow, orange, pink, purple, and red colors peek out. Early spring flowers that bring smiles to our faces are *tulips*, *daffodils*, *dwarf iris*, *hyacinth*, and *muscari*. All around us in our neighborhood, we can see magnificent cherry and apple blossoms. It feels as if the white, red, and pink blossoms are putting a blanket on top of the trees. As these blossoms start to fade away, the late spring and early summer shrubs start to appear - *lilac*, *spirea*, *mock orange*, *forsythia*, and *rhododendron*.



Most spring plants are perennial - ones that come out year after year. Some of our spring perennial bulbs are from previous years, while some bulbs were planted last fall. Most vegetables and some flowers are annuals. Annual plants normally stay alive only for that year. We usually get flower and vegetable seedlings from the Minneapolis farmers market. The vegetables we bought this year were okra, tomato (for mom's *chutney*), beans (*borboti*), snake gourd (*jhingey*), cucumber, and pumpkin (for pumpkin flower, or *kumro phul*). The time we plant new seedlings is the time for me to help my dad dig dig dig! I even have a small shovel just for me.



Then comes summer! Every day as I wake up, I look through my bedroom window and count how many *kumro phuls* are there. Then I go down to pick them. We put them in water and then in the refrigerator, eagerly waiting for my mom to come back from office and batter fry them for me - my dream dinner with rice and ghee! Even if I do not like them, both my sister and I have to eat a banana and eggs for breakfast because the banana peels and eggshells are good for plants - my mom says so! She tries to make compost but often it turns out to be rotten.

We have garden foes - they are many - like Japanese beetles, squirrels, rabbits, and deer. That's why we put a fence around the plants. From time to time we fertilize the plants so they stay healthy. Just like humans, some plants like the sun, and some like the shade. And when they are thirsty and really hot they droop down. That's why we water them every day. This year was extremely hot and dry so we sometimes watered them twice a day. While we are watering, we occasionally pull out the weeds. Some plants



like *dianthus* need deadheading. That just means you remove the dry flowers gently. If you don't do it, then the plants don't bloom.

To entertain all the plants, I like to use my bubble stick to blow bubbles. My sister and I are always there to paint pots for the plants and make colorful birdbaths. We also love to chase moths and practice our gymnastic moves on the grass. One of my most favorite summer flowers is *zinnia* because we get to see so many hummingbirds and butterflies. Plus, the colors are so vibrant! Plants we saw growing and blooming around us this summer were *lilies*, *marigold*, *bee balm*, *balloon flowers*, *zinnia*, *mili*, *daisy*, and *clematis*.

My sister and I both love to take pictures and often fight over who should have the phone - but I must confess that my pictures are always better than hers!

Every Saturday we call our grandparents. We give them a tour of our house and our garden. We compare with my grandma who has more flowers and with my grandpa how many more or less *kumro phuls* I have than him.

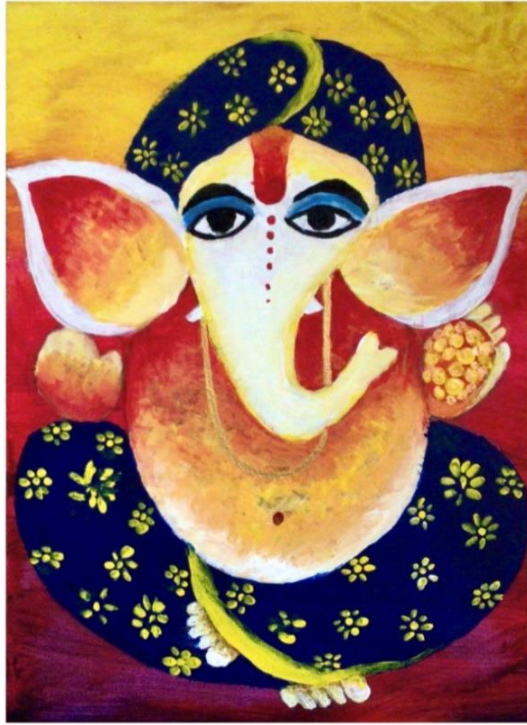


Slowly, I see that leaves start to fall. That means autumn is here! This is the time I can do gardening the most. As the plants start to bloom and fade, we pick seeds from *pansy*, *petunia*, *snapdragon*, and *cosmos* flowers to store them so that we can plant them next year. We clean all the pots and bring the houseplants inside to try to keep the plants alive during winter. This year, we bought a few more stands to put inside the house so we could keep most of our plants inside. My grandpa correctly says that our house resembles a nursery.

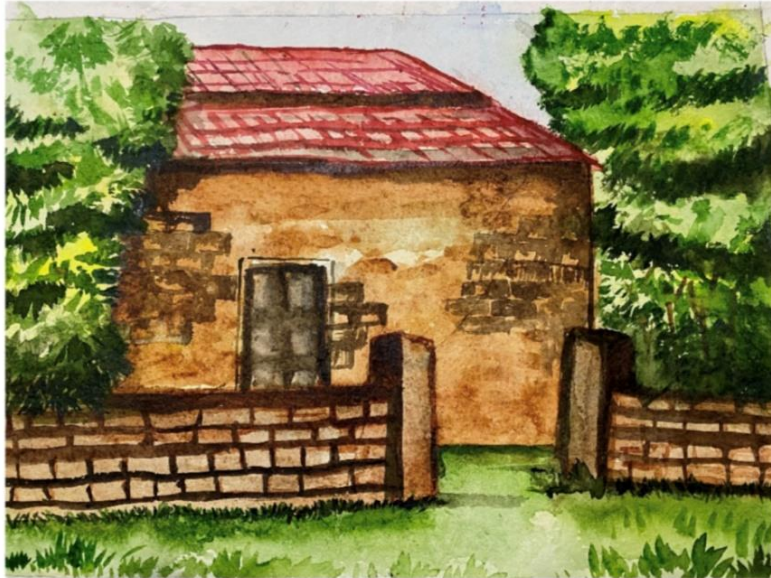
Soon the snow falls. You know what that means. Winter is here, but inside our house, we still water and take care of the houseplants. We sometimes get to see the *amaryllis* and *Christmas cactus* bloom. Near the end of the long winter, we plant the stored seeds in pots and label them. We eagerly look forward to spring again when we will put them in the fresh air! We will bring all our plants outside and the cycle repeats. I hope that the more we try, the better our garden will be! But better or not, we surely will have fun!



Photograph: Aaratrika & Ayushmita Mondal



Ayushmita Mondal | 8 Yrs



Sneha Shaw | 12 Yrs





Ayona Banerjee | 9 Yrs



Anurima Choudhury | 5 Yrs

# Flippy - A Tale of a Lawn Tennis Game

Ronan Bhowmick | 9 Yrs

## Chapter 1 – Who is Flippy???

This is a story about Flippy who is a bold, bright and blue scaly creature. Flippy lives at the *FlippyTree*. Wait a minute! This is not a tree you think with a brown trunk, thousands of leaves and birds sitting on them to their nests! This is Flippy's house *all* in the water! Yes, all in the water!!! If you guessed it, my Flippy is a fish.



Flippy is now 2 years old, a graduate from Finniversity, Bettaville. Guess what? He is already in his late adulthood. Most of his peers live up to three years. He lost his parents when he was 3 months old. If you are sad, then here is the real story. His parents were adapted by a family far away from Bettaville. Flippy was not qualified to go with his parents because he was too young.

Since then Flippy has been living alone. But he is not sad. He spends most of the day swimming around Bettaville. He loves flipping his curly tail. In fact he got a trophy in the art of flipping tails. So for exercise he does rest in the water without twitching a muscle! Wondering why?

It is because he swims *all day*, so for PE his challenge is to **stay still**.

James is Flippy's best friend. James thinks that too about Flippy. James is an elementary kid.



And James is the *only* human character in my story.

## Chapter 2 – FlippyTree

James comes often to FlippyTree and sleeps over. James has his own floor in there. Yes, it is true! And it is the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of Flippy's 5 storey tree.

Flippy lives in the 4<sup>th</sup> floor. The 5<sup>th</sup> floor is the



dining room. The 2<sup>nd</sup> floor is where James does the laundry. First floor is the Welcome Floor. Flippy is so generous that he designed a dry pool for his soul mate so that James can dry himself up when he wants to. And this *dry pool* is on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor. You read it correct it is a *dry pool*. There is *no* swimming pool in FlippyTree.

## Chapter 3 - Flippy has got his credit card

When Flippy was three months, his mother and father gave him their only credit card before leaving. Flippy showed James the credit card. He spends a *lot* of money when they buy something together.

Flippy buys store cards with his credit card. This time he got Dicks Sporting Goods card because he





wished to have a Lawn Tennis court in his 1<sup>st</sup> floor. Yeah, seriously, a Lawn Tennis court, **not** a table tennis court!

They scratched off the sign on the card. 357242 was on his card. Flippy was excited, now is the time to go online shopping!!!

All settled. They chose a leafy surface tennis court. When Flippy was going to place the order, a bummer! The giant fish associate in the DSG store said, "Excuse me, Fishter (*Mister Fish*), your card is not activated yet. Please talk to our giant fish DSG Customer Service."

After an hour of phone call, the card is activated and ready to go.

So, he is back to Mac, opened DSG in Safari, chose the court again. And few rackets. and a box of balls. And it is done, finally!

#### Chapter 4 - The Package

It was a long wait! At last, the delivery Friday came.

Flippy heard a "ding-dong". James was not around. He will come later in the day, and will spend the whole weekend.

So, Flippy had to dive down to the Welcome Floor. And yes, there was a delivery by a underwater drone. The box is huge. Flippy managed to unpack the parts, and installed it. It was by the dry pool. Surprise is ready for James.

A little later, another "ding-dong". And this time it is James. Flippy flipped quickly after opening the door, and hid behind the dry pool, the area he

usually avoids. This is dry-pool after all, not a healthy place for a fish.

As James entered he did not find Flippy there. He rushed upstairs, shouting "Flippy! Where are you?" He could not find Flippy anywhere. He came back to the Welcome Floor again, and something catches his eyes. What is there by the pool? A leafy patch... Is that a ....

When did that come here? Was it there when he came a minute ago? And where is Flippy?

#### Chapter 5 - The Game

Flippy and James have been playing lawn tennis on their own indoor leafy ground tennis court at a stretch of 100 hours! No one realized that. This is Tuesday 7 o'clock in the



evening!

Flippy was still okay. But James was starving crazy now. He was on Gatorade power drink in all 4 days. They really need a break now!

But the game has not ended yet. It was a 5 set match, and each won 2 sets, and they were playing the 5<sup>th</sup> set with 5,555 deuces in a row!!!

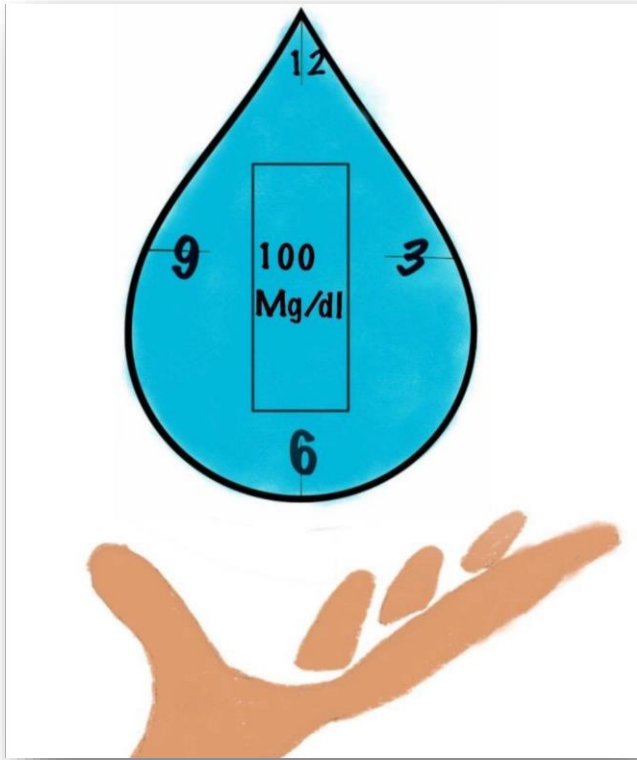
At this point they decided to declare the match a tie. If you don't know, this match was the longest match in the *tennis fistory*.

More to come! Keep reading!

See you on Flippy's next release.



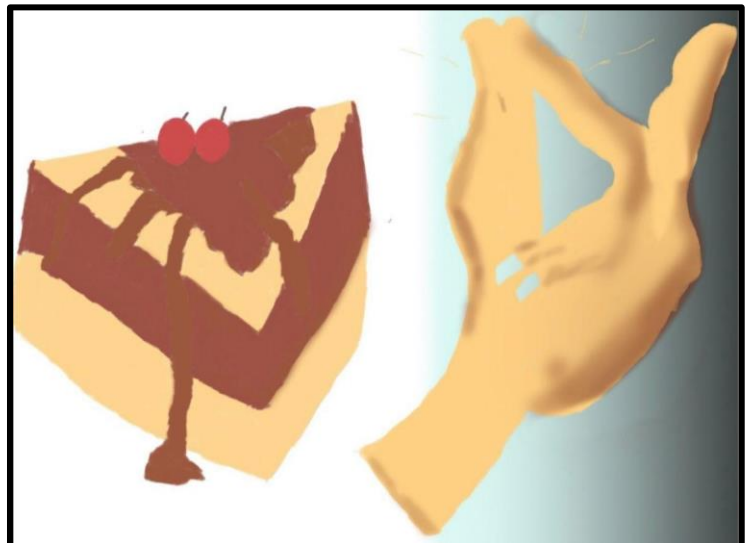
Digital Art - Logo



Srija Goswami | 15 Yrs

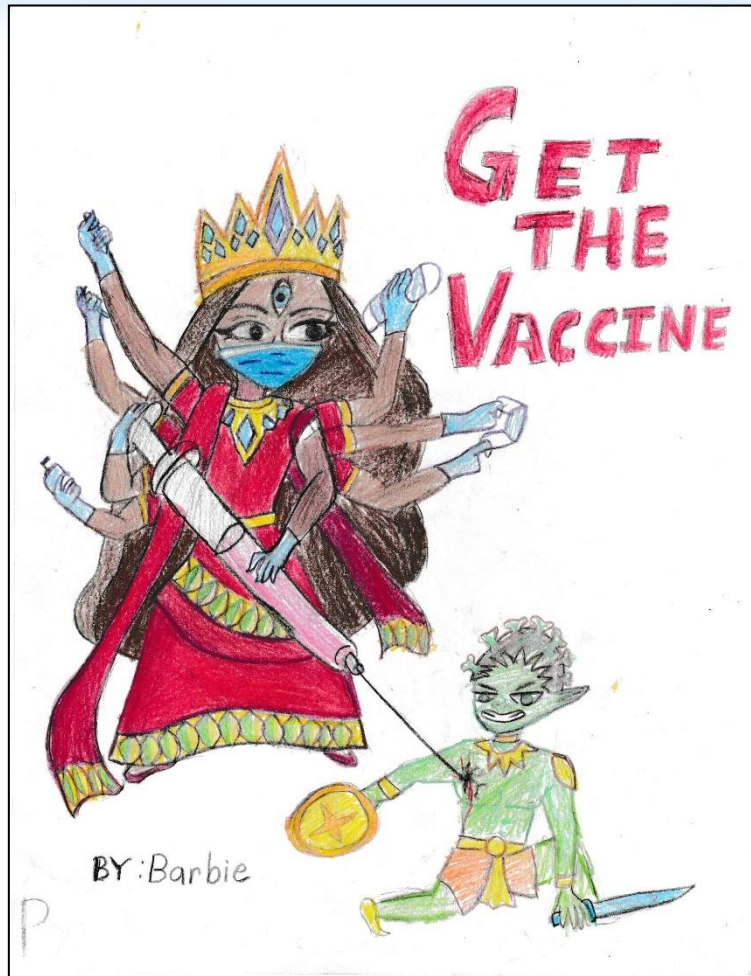
*Take control of blood  
glucose level with a 24/7  
diabetic monitor*

Digital Art – Idiom Illustration



Srija Goswami | 15 Yrs





Barbie Paul | 10 Yrs



Anish Chakraborty | 9 Yrs



Samara Jena | 5 Yrs





Tavishi Chakraborty | 15 Yrs



## Social standards...*Girl's view*

Shoumili Tarafder | 13 Yrs

Cover yourself  
Straighten your hair  
Always be happy  
Live to compare

Sit up straight  
Cross your legs  
Show your smile  
Follow the trends

Don't talk too much  
You'll bore the others  
Lips always glossed  
Wear bright colors

Nails always polished  
Self-esteem demolished  
Face clear and shiny  
Body must be tiny

Always look dumb  
Never talk back  
Exist to please  
Even when you crack

Look at what you've become  
Tattered and broken  
The ideas might be wrong,  
But at least now you belong.



## Purple Saxifrage

### Aaratrika Mondal | 13 Yrs



*A seed not yet awake  
Bursts out into the sunlit air of life  
Quickly covered up by the shifting soil, "for  
its own good" it is told*

When you first found out you were expecting a child, I'm sure you and your husband both prayed for a boy, who could bring you some wealth and a comfortable life, as per society's norms. I'm certain you were disappointed when I came into the world. That's what I assume, since you gave me away to an orphanage where girls are abandoned by their families.

*Eager hands uncover the sprout, nurturing  
it to life*

Mom and Dad adopted me from an orphanage in Kolkata, India, where you must have dropped me off as an infant. They brought me to San Francisco, California soon after my 4th birthday. They couldn't tell me much about you, but I had been wrapped in a blanket that was almost in threads, so they assumed I came from a poor family. You don't even know my name, Ishita, since that was given by the orphanage.

Mom was an art teacher and did painting and gardening in her free time. Dad was the

more grounded one of the two, with a job as an accountant. He also loved stars, and I got my love for astronomy from accompanying him on his stargazing trips. I certainly take after my dad - I don't have a single creative bone in my body.

*It shoots towards the sky, unfurling  
leaf after leaf*

My parents' constant encouragement has shaped me into the woman I am today. When I was young, they gave me everything I needed to succeed, and I excelled all throughout school. Mom always told me to reach for my dreams, and for as long as I can remember, I wanted to be an astronaut and explore the places that seemed so far away, even through a telescope. I poured all my effort into my academics so I would get accepted to my dream job - an astronaut at NASA.



I went to the California Institute of Technology, one of the most prestigious science colleges in the country, and majored in astronomy. Finally ready to become an astronaut, I applied to NASA and waited 5 months before the letter came in the mail.

*Then one by one,  
Those leaves float to the ground,  
And the first winter sets in*



But the first time, my application was rejected. I was devastated, but I never wanted to give up and settle for less. I applied again in 4 years, during their next application window. In the meantime, I started working as a researcher in astrophysics at Caltech. Over time, my dream started to fade away subconsciously. I always applied to become an astronaut whenever they were accepting applications, but even the rejections became part of the routine. I gradually focused all of my life on my current work as I grew a reputation as an astrophysicist. Just as planets revolve around the sun, I revolved around my work, spending every waking hour in my office.

One day I was casually scrolling through job openings for an astronaut, and I saw a notice for a space mission to Mars that urgently needed astronauts. When I read further, I saw the reason the mission was having difficulty finding astronauts - all over the application website, there were messages urging applicants to think carefully about their decision, because chances are they will never come back. But that message didn't bother me. In fact, it sealed the deal, and I never thought twice about applying. I realized I didn't want to come back to Earth, I wanted to escape this world's gravity forever. Someone more committed to family and friends might consider staying back, but I didn't need to be attached to anyone, I only needed myself to become the woman of my dreams.



I waited with renewed energy for the letter, and it arrived at the beginning of summer. The words didn't register in my mind until I read the letter a second time –

I had been accepted! I would have to undergo training for 3 years before I would be part of the first team to set foot on the red planet. And that wasn't all. If we got there safely, we would be setting up a space station and staying there for an extended period of time, gathering all types of scientific data about Mars. Because of the high risk of this mission, NASA was giving me 4 weeks before training so I could spend time on Earth before I left.

I almost laughed out loud. I didn't need a month to spend with my family. By this time I was 37, and both my parents had passed away, Dad when I was still in high school, and Mom a few years back. I didn't have any other family, and I spent so much time on my work, I never made any friends. But then I stopped and thought that over. Was I really that lonely?

My Bengali roommate in college had been the closest thing I had to a friend. Looking back now, I can tell that I unconsciously tried to connect to my culture through her. She had even taught me how to speak basic Bengali, but I never kept in touch with her after college. Truth to be told, it's one of the things I regret doing most. The ache in my heart wasn't just for my friend - it craved any sort of relationship, and I always suppressed that feeling. I spent my whole life pushing people away because I never wanted to feel vulnerable and commit to someone who could easily leave me, just as you left me. I couldn't reconnect with my friend now, but maybe one place on Earth could fill that void in my heart - Kolkata.

*But the sapling finds beauty in the season,  
from the glittering snow to the powder-covered  
evergreens*

Without a second thought, plans were made, bags were packed, and tickets were booked, all in a blur. Though I had grown up in a different country, a part of me still belonged to this city, and I was trying to figure out how these new surroundings fit into my story. I thought of my friend many times when I was in India, as I could see the places she had always talked about, with my own eyes. I realized why it never occurred to me to visit Kolkata before now. I had loosened my roots from the ground to reach towards the sky, while I forgot



one thing - a plant needs deep roots to grow stronger. I could feel new roots growing now, tying this bustling city to my heart.

One thing I really wanted to do here was to see an orphanage, out of curiosity for how my first 4 years of life had been. I took an Uber to a girls' orphanage close to where I was staying. The building was at the heart of the city, and it looked so rundown and small. I ducked inside, and my jaw dropped. I was surrounded by young girls, ranging from newborns to twelve year-olds. There were only three women in the orphanage, taking care of the children. The rest of the work was done by the girls, with the older ones watching over the younger ones. One of the women working there invited me to her office to talk. She told me that about fifty girls were with them now, and the place was hardly bigger than my apartment! My heart broke for all of these small children living without parents, though she and the other two volunteers worked as hard as they could to keep these girls out of the black hole of poverty. I told her about me and why I had come to visit, and at the end, she requested me to tell all the little girls my story to give them hope.

We returned to the main room of the orphanage, and all the girls gathered around me. As I started my story, the children were hanging on to my every last word.

*The sapling stares in awe at the strength of the other trees, stark lines piercing the clouds*



For the next one week, I stopped by the orphanage every day, eager to spend time with the girls. I had never known anyone who had also been adopted in my childhood, but now I found myself surrounded by

girls who were just like me - or not. As I looked into their eyes, I realized how fortunate I was to have been adopted. But one thing about all these girls startled me. They had also been abandoned, but I discovered that they had all accepted that as a fact of life and moved on. None of these girls shied away from relationships like I did or had any harsh feelings toward their mothers, and I started to see the world from their perspective. I never knew I needed to forgive you, but I felt myself doing it anyway, and it made my heart feel lighter.

*As the snow melts, the sapling's roots push deeper into the chalky soil,  
New leaves emerge, and the first flower buds bloom*



The time for me to return to America was drawing close, and though I was looking forward to fulfilling my dream, I would miss these young girls. They had filled that void in my heart, and I was indebted to them. On the flight back home, I couldn't get the girls out of my head. If our society was a solar system, these girls would be unknown, faceless asteroids floating in space without a strong connection to any gravitational field. I wanted to turn them into someone memorable; I wanted to help them become shooting stars. An idea struck me then, and I immediately opened my laptop to set it in motion. It was a wonderful way to give back to the girls at the orphanage, and to spread their story to the world.

*Now the fragile sapling has given way to a massive red oak, ready to explore new heights*





I'm writing this to you from the NASA base in California. I'm leaving in one week, and in the midst of training and preparations, I've tried to tell my story to you. I may not find you, but after meeting the girls, I know that you left me because you loved me, and not because you didn't want me.

My idea was accepted by NASA, and everything to complete it is set in place. We've set up fundraisers around the country, where we will be broadcasting the liftoff, and all the money earned from those fundraisers is going directly to the orphanages in

India. We've also added one last experiment to our mission - to grow the first plant on Mars.

Martian soil is difficult to grow vegetation in, but this plant is a *Purple Saxifrage*, the hardest plant on Earth. It will be dedicated to all the young girls in the world, who grow up strong in hard conditions, and to their mothers, who sacrifice everything for their daughters. I'm proud to be the one who will plant that tree in the center of the first space station on Mars.

The only thing we're waiting for now is the countdown to liftoff.





মাদূর্গা | Anwesa Guha Ghosh Watercolor



Peacock Lady | Ipsita Priyadarshini



# English Corner

©Bodhisatya Bhaduri  
Photography



*Photograph: Bodhisatya Bhaduri*



## Coveted Cape

Smarajit Mitra

“You’ve got to go and cover this”, Carl remarked as he took a sip of coffee at the breakfast table.

Betty was quiet. It would be a great opportunity to write about the first woman prime minister of a large democracy – Mrs. Bandaranaike was a first, but Ceylon was a tiny state – a dwarf compared to India. But she had never traveled to Asia, actually not even to Europe. Plus, would she be able to get an appointment to interview Mrs. Gandhi, even if she got there? It would be a major scoop for *Ladies Home Journal* though, if she could manage. And she was very interested to see how a woman uses her power at that level, an experience Americans never had.

Betty Friedan, the celebrated author, was on a plane in a week. *LHJ* gave her \$3,000 for the trip; it would double if she got an interview and triple if it was an exclusive. She did get an interview. She carried a copy of her bright red *The Feminine Mystique* as a gift for the prime minister. At the end of the interview, Mrs. Gandhi invited Betty to travel with her. Over the next several weeks, they became friends and Betty was amazed at how feminine, yet authoritative Indira was. None of the male political style, none of the harshness she had noticed with many of the aspiring women politicians she had known in America.

On the last day of her three-week trip, there was a call from the Prime minister’s office. “Mrs. Friedan,” the soft voice said. “Do you have more than one coat, you are travelling with? The prime minister so admires your reversible cape.” Betty did not know what to say ! She

had been wearing the cape, the only designer garment in her wardrobe, a Rudy Gernreich black and camel cloak. The prime minister of India had her eyes on her outerwear !! What would she do? Donate her prized possession to her hostess?

*“She really wants it?”*

“Oh no, no !” the secretary whispered. “Just to borrow it for a few hours”. The cape was dispatched by courier and returned at the airport the next day, wrapped in brown paper.

As soon as Betty Friedan got back to the U.S., she called up Rudy and told him about the cape and Mrs. Gandhi’s fascination with it. “Oh, what do I do?” Rudy said. I have only one more left in my collection and it’s a size 6. Do you think it will fit her? It is also last year’s design” he said reluctantly. Betty insisted that he should send it.

A few months later, PM Indira Gandhi came on an official visit to the US seeking aid for her country’s horrible famine. President Johnson was to receive her in the White House and Betty went there to give her moral support. Betty was in the front line of the press group with shutters clicking everywhere. Indira stepped out of the helicopter on the WH grounds, dressed in a gorgeous sari with a reversible black and camel cape over it!! As she passed Betty in the press group, she gave her a big broad wink.



# Human relationship with God and the Universe

## Nepal Howlader

We are born as human beings on this earth which is part of the solar system. The sun is one of the billions of stars in our galaxy and there are trillions of galaxies in this Universe and there could be multi-Universes. That tells us how infinitely small this earth is in the Universe. The universal question in our mind, is there a creator of this Universe? The simple answer is, we do not know. The Big Bang Theory says the Universe as we know it started with an infinitely hot, infinitely dense singularity, then inflated- first at an unimaginable speed, and then a more measurable rate- over the next 13.8 billion years to the cosmos that we know today. We know from Einstein that  $E=mc^2$  where E=energy, m=mass and c=speed of light. The Big Bang transformed energy into lighter elements such as hydrogen and helium. But we do not know the source of all the dense energy. Scientists all over the world are working nonstop to determine how the Universe was formed.

Human beings from very early in our civilization have been trying to solve the mystery of creation of life on this earth and what happens to our soul when we die. Religion and spirituality are both rooted in trying to understand the meaning of life and, in some cases, how a relationship with a higher power may influence that meaning. Religion is an organized community-based system of beliefs, while spirituality resides within the individual and what they personally believe.

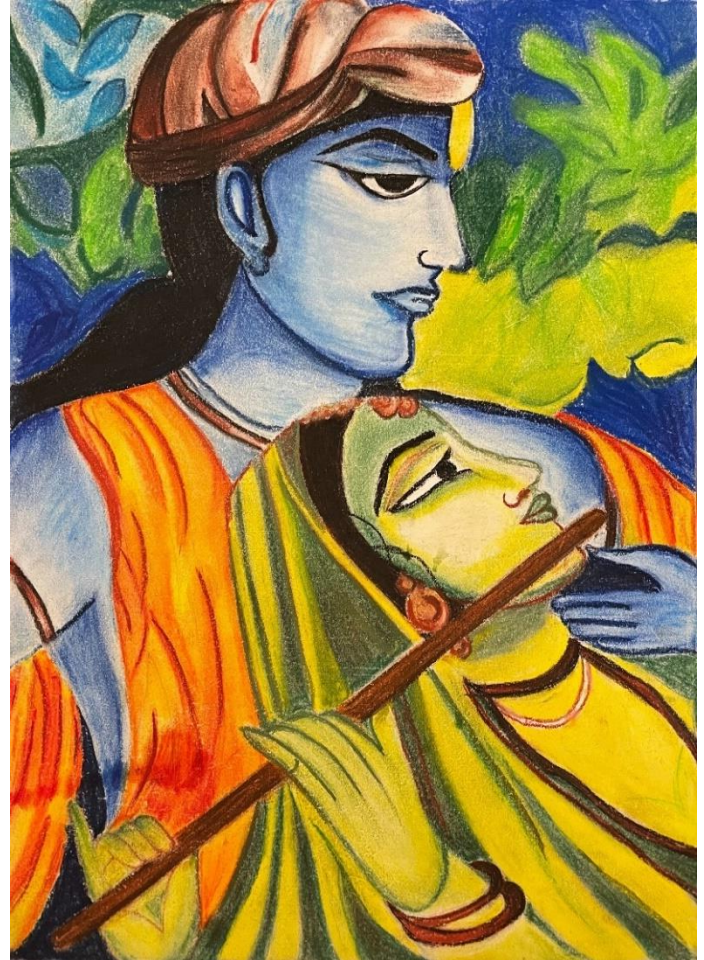
According to current estimates, there are about 4200 active religions in the world. The five largest religious groups in the world are estimated to account for 5.8 billion people, 84% of the world population. Christianity 32% (2.2 billion), Islam 23% (1.6 billion), Hinduism 15%(1.0 billion), Buddhism 7% (0.5 billion), and Folk 6% (0.4 billion). A 2017 Pew Projection suggests that Islam will overtake Christianity as the plurality by 2075. On average women are more religious than men.

Are there really big differences among the ideologies of these main religions? Sree Ramkrishna Paramhangsha Dev tried to understand all these main religions by practicing them for a while. He concluded that there are hardly any differences in the ideologies of all these religions. He said you can go to the same destination through an infinite number of pathways. He said there should not be any conflicts between two different religions. Conflicts among different religions arise due to misinterpretation and misinformation among the followers. Recently, religion is used as a tool to create anarchy and religious fanaticism in the world. The origin of some of the large conflicts of the world are rooted to misinterpretation and misinformation. More and more people are getting killed due to religious conflicts. Hindu -Muslim, Palestine-Israel and Christian vs. Muslim fights are ongoing in this world. Facebook, YouTube and other electronic Media may spread false information and those may create religious conflicts. Christianity and Islam believe in one life, whereas Hinduism and Buddhism believe in Reincarnation. Attributes of Hinduism and Buddhism are similar, and attributes of Islam and Christianity are similar as well. In all major religions when the soul departs from



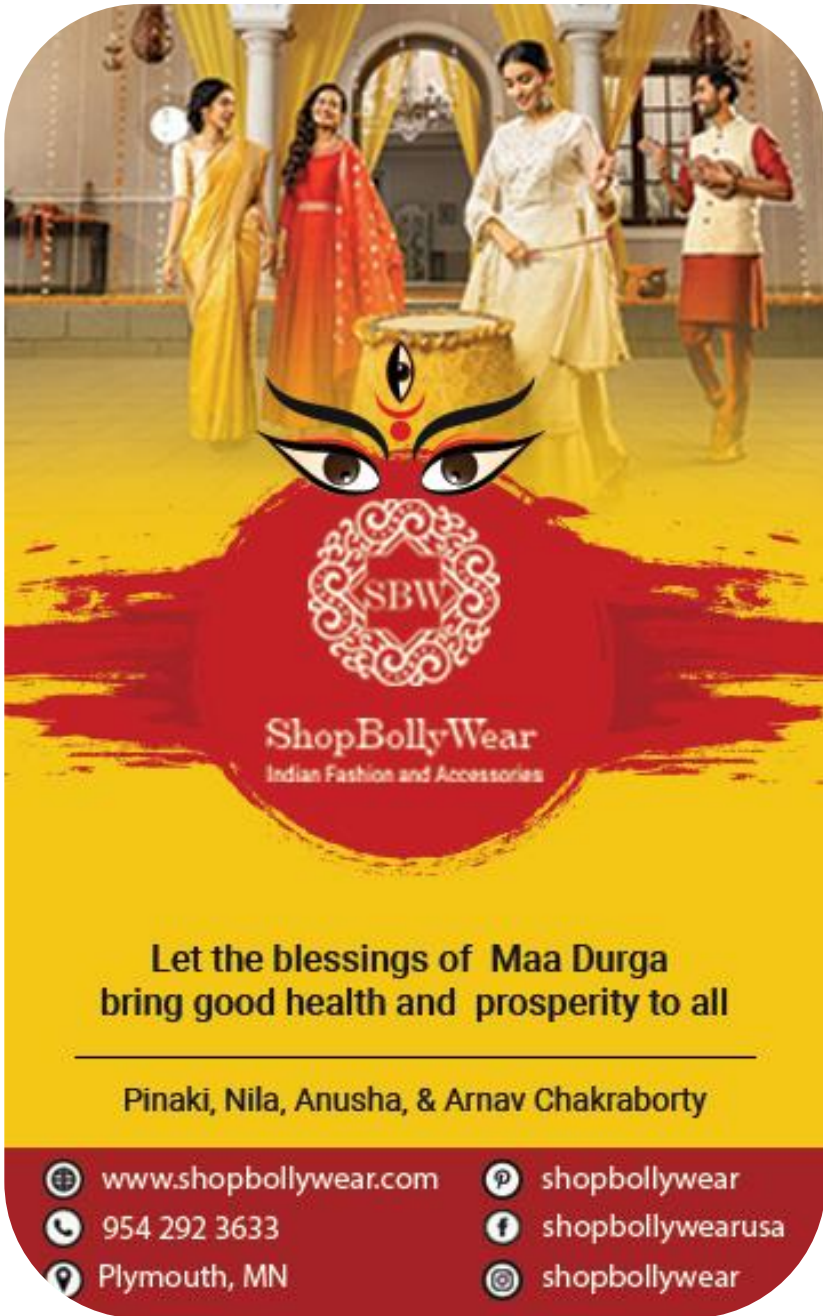
the body we die. In Hinduism and Buddhism, we are reborn again and again until salvation of the soul. In Christianity and Islam, the soul returns to the body on the day of the final Judgement.

The soul is immortal. We may sleep for a little when we die, but we can never be destroyed like energy. We exist and that existence is eternal. The body has come, and it will vanish, but the soul essence within it will never cease to exist. Nothing can terminate that eternal consciousness. As matter and energy are indestructible as science has proved, the soul or spiritual essence of living beings are indestructible. Matter undergoes change, the soul undergoes changing experiences. Radical changes are termed death, but death does not change the soul. Like every droplet of water goes down to the ocean, every little soul of living being ends up joining the great soul which we call God, Allah, Bhagaban, and Buddha. Bhagavad Gita speaks beautifully and solacingly of the immortality of the soul. " Never the spirit was born; the spirit shall cease to be never; Never was time it was not: End and Beginning are dreams; Birthless and deathless and changeless remainth spirit forever; Death hath not touched it at all, dead though the house of it seems." Death is not the end: it is temporary emancipation; given to you when Karma, the law of Justice, is determining that your present body and environment have served their purpose, or when you are too weary or exhausted by suffering to bear the burden of physical existence any longer. To those who are suffering, death is resurrection from painful tortures of flesh into awakened peace and calmness. To the elderly, it is a pension earned by years of struggling through life. For all it is a welcome rest.



**Radha Krishna | Subhra Saha**



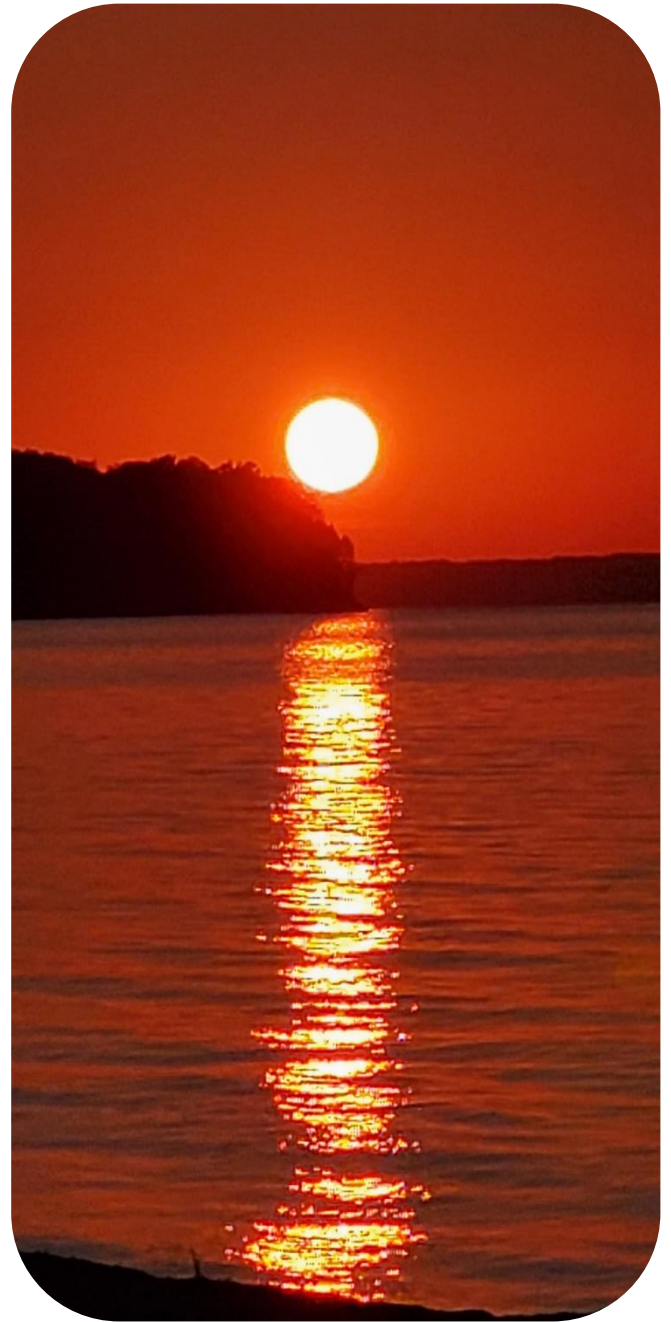


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*Photograph: Koushik Dutta*



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Wishes you a Happy and Blessed



*durga pooja*



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